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MR. INGLESIDE

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MR. INGLESIDE

BY

E. V. LUCAS

AUTHOR OF "OVER BEMERTON'S," ETC.

New York

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MR. INGLESIDE

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH A SELF-CONTAINED GENTLEMAN SUDDENLY FEELS LONELY

MR. and Mrs. Ingleside had never quarrelled. They had merely drifted apart in a perfectly amicable way, without rancour and without tears. Mr. Ingleside, his married period over, resumed the status of a bachelor, at first in his own house, and later, his wife having acquired a tendency to asthma which made London impossible, in his own rooms in London; while Mrs. Ingleside, resuming the single state quite as naturally, settled at Bournemouth, which was not only good for her breathing, on account of its profusion of pines, but contained also much congenial society, including a Dante Circle.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Ingleside was passionately a parent. Mr. Ingleside, when he met his daughters, enjoyed their laughing side and did his best to keep them laughing; Mrs. Ingleside's interests lying chiefly in literature and problem fiction, as it is called, she languidly studied them from her sofa when the holidays projected them within her field of vision. During these holidays Mr. Ingle-

side came down from Saturday to Monday and talked pretty ironical talk — irony being the refuge of the modern parent who shrinks from responsibility and an interference with others which he considers may be unjustifiable. He always brought with him some expensive fruit for Mrs. Ingleside, but it would tax the conscience of the Bournemouth porters to say that the distinguished gentleman with the iron-grey hair took his seat in the London train on Monday mornings with any other expression than one of complete satisfaction. Alison and Ann accompanied him to the station to keep the ball of chaff in the air till the last possible moment. They then walked back to Mrs. Ingleside's sofa with laggard steps.

For a week or two in the holidays they stayed with their father in London, in his comfortable rooms at the foot of Buckingham Street, when his friends, all a little out-of-the-way and amusing, rallied to his side to assist in their beguilement and take them to the Zoo and to Maskelyne & Devant's and the other entertainments for the young. Now and then it happened in the course of these visits that some little trouble would occur — a mood of tiredness or such a pain as is only possible when odd and generous gentlemen have the ordering of schoolgirls' luncheons or teas — which led to a momentary lifting of the veil of raillery that hung normally between Mr. Ingleside and his daughters, and for an instant they might see mistily eyes that were misty too ; but for the most part he chaffed the week away, and if ever he sighed, sighed in private.

So it had gone on for some years. In his spare time, of which he had no particular lack, Mr. Ingleside had played with literature, and his translation of Horace, still in progress, was considered to be — so far as prose could go — almost perfect. Mr. Ingleside's life was indeed a very easy one. On leaving his comfortable rooms every morning, at an hour late enough for the world to be warmed, he walked to a hardly less comfortable apartment in one of the huge Government buildings in Whitehall. It may have been the Board of Education; it may have been the Board of Trade, or even the Treasury: few knew which, and the wags said that Ingleside himself was not certain. Whatever it was, he said nothing about it; but it was generally understood that he was a permanent official of high standing, and, being already a C.B., was in serious danger, two or three times a year, on the critical days for English gentlemen, of receiving a knighthood.

At the time this chronicle opens Mr. Ingleside was fifty-one, while Mrs. Ingleside was a little his senior. In panic as to her health, which had been steadily declining, Mrs. Ingleside had just started with Alison on a six months' visit to Japan. Ann was still at school.

Such was the condition of affairs when one morning Mr. Ingleside awoke quite early, with a totally new sense of loneliness which quickly led him to the decision that Ann should at once leave school and come to live with him. She had been at school long enough, he reasoned; she was a quick girl, and

was now ripe to learn far more from life than from instructors, even though they had the highest references and best diplomas. What was far more important, Mr. Ingleside felt, was that he wanted her company. He was not old; he was not ill; he was not bored; but there was a tiny ache in his heart that morning which could be explained by no doctor save a doctor of the mind.

Mr. Ingleside, being one who was used to having his own way and having it swiftly, sat down before breakfast and wrote two letters.

"DEAR MISS RIDLEY," — ran the first, — "I shall have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation to the prize distribution on the 17th, especially as it will be Ann's last, as I have decided that she shall come to live with me here during her sister's absence abroad."

The other was to Ann herself.

"DEAR TÁNSY," — wrote her father, — "I want you to come and look after your aged parent and get him ready for the silent tomb. If you will do that, I will be equally generous and will come to the French play on the 17th, but only on the further condition that, unless you are acting in it, you will sit by me and translate; and after that no more school. We will be very comfortable together, by Heaven we will."

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH WE ENTER A CIRCLE OF FRIENDS ON THE BANKS OF A GREY RIVER

MR. INGLESIDE was one of those rare men who are as nice in their own homes as they are in other people's — if not nicer. In fact, he liked his own home best — too well, he used to say, since it made him a bad traveller, and, though a good guest, an unwilling one. It is the uncomfortable men in their own homes that make the best visitors.

It was for a good reason that he rarely dined out. His pleasure lay so much more in the direction of informality — friendships rather than acquaintanceships — that he hesitated to jeopardize it by absenting himself from his own roof-tree. His rooms were one of the last strongholds of the dropping-in habit; and how could they continue to be so if their owner continually left them? "It is more blessed," he would say, "to entertain than to be entertained." And indeed it is well that a few persons should remain to keep alive the old custom of casual evening visits, or it must die the death. London's self-conscious and scientifically ordered hospitalities menace it nightly.

It was Mr. Ingleside's feeling for the river, which

amounted almost to a passion, that had fixed his home in Buckingham Street. If the Thames Conservancy were a body elected only from lyrical enthusiasts, he would have been the chairman. He had waited long for his present rooms, having marked them down years before, and indeed having offered the late tenant a large bribe to vacate them untimely. But no, London's riparians are hard to dislodge: it is a stream which makes for fidelity. Then came Death with the scythe that sooner or later cuts every knot, and the new tenant walked in, turned around three times, so to speak, like a tired dog, and was at home.

It is probable that had he been able to foresee the chromatic advertisements of Wellingtonia Wine and Shamrock Tea burning their jumpy way through the night, and the establishment of so vast and noisy and tireless a fleet of Dreadnought trams as that which now patrols the north bank of the Thames, he might have made his abode farther west, at Chelsea; but, having waited for this home, and for a while enjoyed it without these vexations, he would not change now, being sufficiently a Londoner to tolerate, and indeed possibly even to like, a London nuisance after a day or two, and at heart to be pleased to have near at hand objects so suitable for humorous attack and mock indignation. Only a surgical operation, and that a very serious one, can stop a true Londoner's grumbling, or induce him to live anywhere else.

One of the pictures in the hall was a print of old London Bridge with the massed houses upon it; and it is there that Mr. Ingleside would assuredly have

lived had he been a medieval. But of course, as he often said, the Thames of that day had none of the fascination of the Thames as we know it now. It needed the arts of sophistication to bring out its deepest subtleties — just as a woman does. The Thames must have been beautiful always; but there is a beauty of the wild and a beauty of the city; and it is the beauty of a city river — and a city of human energy — that the Thames so exquisitely has. The colour that it borrows from the sky is less wonderful than that which it gains in conflict with the glow of gas and electricity. Its sunsets must be thickened and engloomed by factory smoke ere they can tinge it with the hues we know. Only thus it becomes our stream of mystery.

Mr. Ingleside's bedroom windows gave upon the Embankment, and he knew every aspect of the river's genius — from its mists at dawn and its gold at sunrise, throughout the busy day of tugs and barges, to the brilliant blackness of its night.

It was Mr. Ingleside's old-fashioned rule to keep open house every Friday evening. His friends were welcome at all times, but on Fridays they not only might themselves drop in, but bring with them anyone they liked. They began to arrive at about nine and left between twelve and one.

Chief among the more constant visitors was Dr. Staminer. Dr. Staminer was now an elderly man; he had come, as he himself put it, to a point of life when one turns first to the death column of the *Times:* to see who has gone being more important than to see what has happened. He had given

up his practice for some years, and no longer was willing even to be consulted. His hobby was collecting, and his house in Gower Street was a museum rather than a home. Everything that was curious had an appeal for the doctor, whose sense of beauty was poor. Hence he had no pictures but odd ones: that head of Christ engraved in one spiral line would be more to him than the sweet and exquisite normality of a Filippino Lippi. His lumber, however, included one or two signboards attributed to David Cox, Morland, and even Hogarth, which took their place quite naturally among Fiji weapons, Chinese instruments of torture, violins, Maundy money, Toby jugs, and animals carved in cornelian.

But his real distinction as a collector lay in his autographs, of which he had such an extraordinary assemblage that there was hardly a historian or biographer in England or Europe but had sought access to it in the course of his labours. Dr. Staminer usually gave permission; but there were certain of his treasures that no one was allowed to copy.

"Very immoral and curmudgeonly," Mr. Ingleside used to call it. "How dare you keep back good letters like that?" (the doctor even had a few of Lamb's). "They belong to the world, not to you."

But the doctor used only to laugh. "What's mine I'll hold," he replied. "The world has made it possible for me to acquire them; and the world therefore must wait." But it was always understood that the doctor intended to publish his best autographs himself, when the hour struck. Meanwhile, he continued to buy more, and was as well

known at Sotheby's as the late Mr. Salting at Christie's. And he had the pleasant habit of bringing a new treasure to Mr. Ingleside's rooms, that his little circle of friends at any rate might enjoy it too.

Perhaps the most serious member of the circle was Richard Oast, M.P., one of the quieter and more thoughtful members of the Labour party. Mr. Ingleside had met him officially, and they had become friends—although both were then nearly fifty, an age when new friends become very difficult of acquisition. Disciples, yes, and flatterers; but not friends. Richard Oast was a widower and a lonely one, and he needed society, while he had now come to a time of life when he could afford at last to be a little easy and restful. His business—he was a boat builder on the Thames—had done well, and he was in fact in a position to go into Parliament as a member of the idle class had he wished to; but he preferred to throw in his lot with the Labour men, although many of them were too extreme for his entire approval. He was a type, with (like all types) certain modifications. Thus, he had the ordinary practical agnosticism of the Socialist, but it was softened by an uncommon gentleness, a touch of regret for having to side against so many worthy and simple people. His attitude was singularly aloof for a Labour member. He seemed indeed to hover a little above the ground which other people trod, raised to that position not by any spiritual or unearthly force, but by the sheer impartiality of the interested observer and the detachment of disil-

lusionment. From this altitude he could see the right and wrong of every party, his own included. Such men never become prime ministers and rarely under-secretaries; but they are desirable companions.

"I'm tired of adjectives," he said one evening, during a discussion in which Leslie had been distributing condemnatory epigrams with more than his usual freedom. "They are all right when you're young; young people can use them with confidence, and little people require their aid all the time; but I'm tired of them. 'Good' and 'bad' I've particularly done with. I have known for a long while now that there are no good men and no bad men. There are just men; that is to say, human creatures built up of strengths and weaknesses, contradictions and tendencies. 'Good' and 'bad'—adjectives made by Society for its own protection. The moment a man says, 'I am good,' he is in touch with badness; the moment a man says, 'I am bad,' he is in danger of becoming better."

His Socialism was marked by no anger against the rich. He knew that reforms could not come in a moment, and that particularly in England sudden revolutions were impossible; but he knew also that the people were going to win. "Of course Socialism must come," he said. "You can see it drawing nearer as clearly as you can see, in the small hours, the approach of day. Socialism never had so powerful an ally as the motor-car. The motor-car is the most brutally vivid symbol of the callousness, the oppressiveness, and the luxury of the rich that was ever devised; and every new motor-car that is put

on the road is another nail in the coffin of Plutocracy."

"But doesn't history show us," said Dr. Staminer, "that the poor like to be bullied a little by the rich; that they admire wealth much more than they envy it?"

"History may show that," said Oast, "but history also shows that new ideas make for change. Ideas are getting spread about the world that must be causing a panic in all feudal strongholds where there is a grain of observation or thought. Look at the relations between master and man to-day as an example of the change. To-day it is not the men who fear they are going to be sacked, it is the masters who fear they may receive notice. That is symptomatic, isn't it? A very good straw to tell the wind by.

"We here, in the South," he went on, "have no real chance to watch the change. The South is too fond of its feudal chains; our hands rise so naturally to our forelocks. Everything in the South — by which particularly I mean London and Surrey and Kent and Sussex — is retrogressive: there is no spirit of revolt. Even Kent's back has acquired a hinge — Kent that produced John Ball and Jack Cade. You have only to look at the railways we put up with — the monopolies we endure — to recognize that. But the North — that is where the furnace is being heated for the melting of the fetters. All my holidays are spent in the North."

Henry Thrace, like his host, was a Government official. He was between fifty and sixty, one of

those simple, quiet, and generous bachelors who always eat their Sunday dinner in the same friend's house and remember birthdays. "Every inch an uncle" might be cut on their tombstones. Mr. Thrace himself said little, but he had a chuckling appreciation of the humour of others which made him a perfect listener.

Vycount Ramer was a detached bachelor artist whom every one liked. He drifted affectionately through life and managed to make just as much of an income as he needed. His favourite sketching-ground was Sussex. Upon his odd first name he was very amusing. "Change it?" he would say; "certainly not. It may be equivocal, but I don't mind that, if you don't. And after all, my father gave it me: I did not assume it, like the Sangers. For it is a perpetual joy to me. It procures me — until it is written — every kind of homage and attention. Only this morning, for example, I wanted some dress boots. I went to a shop in Regent Street, where I was by no means well treated. The assistants gave me a glance, decided I was of no importance, and did their best to persuade me that boots that didn't fit fitted. I gave them some trouble in return, and they were heartily sick of me and hardly concealed their feelings. Very well; it is then that my innings really begins. 'Where shall we send them? What name?' the man asked. 'Vycount Ramer,' I said. An electric wave ran through the shop. The manager emerged from a little glass cubicle in which, since I was so negligible, he had been joking with the cash girl, and began to bend

his back and rub his hands. He suddenly discovered that it was fine weather, and said so. I let the place get into a perfect quagmire of toadyism, and then I asked for a pen to write the address. I wrote: 'Mr. Vycount Ramer, 4 Peel Studios, Kensington,' and left as the bitter realization had them in its grip."

These were the older men. Chief among the younger were Jack Christie and Sanders Leslie. Christie was one of the sub-editors of an evening paper. The paper being Conservative, he was of course a Radical, if not actually a Republican, and in private life he was Richard Oast's very fervent admirer. Every man is something of a specialist in one line or other, and Christie in his hours of leisure hunted for water colours of the early school and discovered cheap foreign restaurants. It was practically impossible to meet him without (*a*) being shown a faint and faded sketch almost certain to be a Girtin, and (*b*) being adjured to try a new eighteenpenny table d'hôte. For Christie had none of the ordinary man's selfishness in such matters. He liked to share his pleasures.

Soho was full of his little paradises, and every week he had added another to his list. His favourite was of course "Au Grand Pauvre," because the pretty waitresses were there and the adroit *patronne* had skilfully led him to believe that he was of all her regular customers the very flower and gem. What is the use of being a comfortable French commercial matron if you don't do that? His French was never a very strong point, but he was scrupulous to

employ it in these little encounters. Downstairs, however, he adhered to English — as indeed most of the male customers do, leaving French to that sex which automatically acquires it. The success of many honeymoons and perhaps a few marriages has been due to the excellent rule which sees that the daughters of England are not wholly imbecile on continental railway platforms.

Leslie was a young architect and decorator to whom rich people who bought old houses resorted in their perplexity. He found bare walls and left them blossoming like the rose. He was accustomed to hear that it absolutely must be done for two hundred pounds, and equally accustomed to sending in his account for five hundred and getting it paid. On his off days he scoured the country for Chippendale and old oak; but himself lived in a residential club furnished by Maple. It gave him no pain to acquire beautiful things for other people. He enjoyed his life thoroughly; his only melancholy thought was embodied in the sombre Spanish proverb which comes home with force to all architects: "The house is finished, and death enters."

At the time this chronicle opens, Leslie, who had a poetical turn too, was preparing to be very busy as pageant master in Norfolk.

Dr. Staminer and Richard Oast were widowers. The others were like Sir John Dunfern in the immortal story: "they never yet had entertained the thought of yielding up their bacheloric ideas to supplace them with others which eventually should coincide with those of a different sex."

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH WE CATCH SIGHT OF MATRONS IN THE MAKING, AND FATHER AND DAUGHTER MEET

IT was a great day at Millais House, for the prizes were to be given away by the Bishop, and relations and friends were to be present. Excitement naturally ruled, mingled, here and there, with a little misgiving among certain of the girls — by no means unfilial at heart — as to the presentability of their parents; while positive dismay overtook one or two whose stories of home splendour had been a little too reckless. Mabel Strangeways, for example, having built a very splendid edifice of luxury, comprising a hunter of her very own, on the generosity and hospitality of a rich aunt, was feeling considerable disquietude as the time drew near for the public display of Lieut.-Col. Strangeways' too carefully tended tall hat and Mrs. Strangeways' eight-and-elevenpenny boots. Among the other girls who for different reasons were hardly less delighted at the prospect of this parade of progenitors was Sybil Aylward, who, always destructive and advanced, with the courage to express most of her thoughts, went so far as to call it indecent.

There remained, however, as there always will, no matter how the flag of progress may flap, a solid old-

fashioned simple majority, whose hearts had borrowed fire from the domestic hearth and had lovingly guarded the flame, to whom the thought of the nearness of their father and mother brought nothing but a throbbing happiness that was almost more than they could bear. These were for the most part members of large families, accustomed to all the usual frank jollity and give-and-take of nursery and playroom life, having minds automatically prepared by such conditions for that tolerance, that instinct of honest civic compromise, which used to be the most valuable possession of the best Englishwomen: that mental frame which, finding it so natural that boys should show unreasonableness and temper, superiority and tyranny, continues to expect the same of men, without any corresponding distaste for them.

Ann awaited Mr. Ingleside's arrival with a beating heart; for although he had never been demonstrative with her or her sister, and indeed had not disguised the fact that he managed very comfortably without them, her feeling for him was warm and deep, and as she thought of him now, after making his letter her own, not a little protective. Like most girls, she was already in character something of a mother, and the sudden invitation to share the life in Buckingham Street had quickened the maternal instinct; so that she had already framed a considerable list of guardian duties, and was very happy in the anticipation of exchanging the gloss of Messrs. Aldis Wright and J. W. Clark upon Cordelia's simple devotion and Lear's outbursts of bewilderment and rage (the task of the Literature Class for the past three months)

for such practical filialities as sending her father to the barber at the right time, tying his white tie, and having his slippers before the fire on wet days.

A tall fair girl ran her arm round Ann's waist as she stood by the window waiting for the first sign of the guests.

"Will he come, do you think?" she asked.

"He said he would, and so of course he will, poor dear," said Ann. "But he'll hate it. He's such an awful funk."

"How will he come, do you think?"

"Well, they'll all ride in cabs, and he'll either shoot right out of the station and get here first, or hang about and get here last."

"But that's much more noticeable than getting mixed up with the cab-loads," said Kathleen.

"Of course it is. In trying to avoid notice he's always really attracting it; but it doesn't matter, if that's his way. Besides, he hates talking, and there'll be such a lot in the cabs."

Other girls had meanwhile joined them, and now a solid little group of fairly caustic observers—as in the mass all English spectators seem to be—filled the window's bow, prepared for the most part to do their worst with the visitors' costumes.

"Look," said Muriel Vansittart, "there's the first carriage, and I say, what awful cheek! If old Podmore hasn't put my dear 'General' into harness!"

"That's not 'General,'" said another, scornfully.

"Not 'General'!" replied Miss Vansittart. "Perhaps you'll allow me to know my own rocking-horse. It's the only white one Podmore's got. With

all this crowd coming, no wonder he's had to be used."

"'Extras. Riding lessons with competent masters, four guineas,'" quoted Miss Aylward. "I think your father ought to have a discount after this, especially as there's every sign that the competent master is now driving the second cab."

"So he is," cried the others. "Oh, what a shame! The darling 'Consul'!" (The riding-master was called alternately "Consul" and "Almost Human"; but not, I need hardly say, to his honest if homely face. When addressed thus openly he was Mr. Judd.)

"I say," exclaimed Miss Charteris, "isn't that the Bishop's hat? I'm sure I can see its rigging."

"Yes, yes, it's the Bishop. 'Here beginneth the first lesson,'" said Miss Aylward.

"Oh, Sybil, don't be so naughty," said little Winifred Heather.

"He has beautiful legs," said Sybil, as the Bishop descended and helped out his companions, all ladies. "Almost they persuade me to be a Christian. What a lot the great Nonconformist preachers lose by not showing theirs. All they do is to put belladonna in their eyes."

"Sybil, dear, I can't stand it," said Winifred, quite tearfully. "You talk so dreadfully."

"Well, I'll be proper," said Sybil, "but I suppose the good God made my wicked tongue as well as your pious ears. There's mother in the next cab. What *has* she got on? Why won't fat women learn that stripes are the only thing? Oh, Ann darling,

do you think I'm going to be like that? Girls don't *always* grow like their mothers, do they? I'll never have a proposal if we're seen together. Good-bye. I'm going to tie her bonnet on straight anyway, and try and find her another coloured ribbon."

The rest of the girls remained in the bow window and continued to note and criticize the arrivals, the party diminishing one by one as relatives were sighted. When the last carriage had disburdened itself, Ann was left alone; but she did not despair, and was soon rewarded by the sight of a grey hat appearing over the hill, at which she sprang down the stairs and out of the house.

The tall, fragile-looking man with iron-grey hair stopped as he saw her, overcome by the beautiful urgency of her approach. She ran swiftly and eagerly as a girl in an unsophisticated age would have run to meet her lover, her face glad with welcome. "And this is my daughter!" he thought as she approached. "Mine. To think she should be so glad to see me! And at seventeen too!" The realization made him happy — even if it were only an impulse on the girl's part.

He held her from him and looked at her thoughtfully and with secret pride.

"How well you look!" he said. "And you've grown, too! Why do you grow so, Tansy?" he added with humorous petulance. "This cursed growth! Why has everybody got to grow? Why can't you be as you were? I can't ever wear you on my watch-chain any more."

"No," she said, "and you mustn't say 'cursed'

any more, either — at least not here. There's a Bishop on the premises somewhere."

"Surely," said he. "I know. The Right Reverend Philip Burmerleigh, Bishop of Ilchester. Aren't we bosom friends? Didn't we ride from London together and agree about the respective merits of Pontet Canet and Brane Cantenac? A very sound man — in the cellar — and I dare say that a sound man in the cellar is a sound man out of it. I hope so."

"He's going to give away the prizes," said Ann.

"He'll give you yours beautifully," said her father. "He overflows with milk, honey, and the best advice that money can buy. But tell me what I'm to do. Where shall I sit? I would like, as I said, to sit by you, but the prize spoils it all: you'll be bathed in limelight, and I shall be included in its beams as the author of the prodigy. That's too appalling. Is there no means of being a perfect stranger and not talking to Miss Ridley?"

"Oh, no," said Ann. "You must be good to-day. It will soon be over. You must be quite good and ordinary, just like a girl's parent and not at all like the interesting and spoilt Mr. Ingleside. It won't do you any harm."

"My dear Ann, you're becoming a bully. I withdraw my invitation to you; I shall continue to live all alone."

"And afterwards, as a reward," Ann continued, "I will let you listen to Sybil Aylward, who is really much more suited to be your daughter than I am. But now you must be polite to Miss Ridley."

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH AN INSTRUCTRESS OF YOUTH HAS QUALMS

THE firm of educational agents in Bury Street who had Miss Ridley's establishment on their books always made a point of telling their clients that she was exceedingly well-connected. The phrase as a rule involves a distant title and a fairly contiguous church dignitary or M.P. In the case of Miss Ridley it meant that her grandfather had been Dean of Bevan, and that her younger sister had married an officer and gentleman who took a leading part every year in the organization of the Military Tournament.

Miss Ridley was forty-six. She was tall and aquiline, a perfect example of that type of cultured woman whom men do not marry; and also a perfect example of that type of cultured woman who never repines because she has not been asked in marriage. Miss Ridley had her own life to lead, and was happier in training the daughters of gentlemen to take their place in society quietly and efficiently than she could ever have been as any one man's helpmate. Men, assisted no doubt by the humour of literature and the stage, are too apt to fall into the mistake of be-

lieving that every unmarried woman is pining away in disappointment or chagrin. It is a state of error that is probably not on the increase.

Miss Ridley was a good and sensible woman who had come through the perils of her autocracy more satisfactorily than many of her fellow schoolmistresses and most of her fellow school-masters. To escape injury altogether seems to be an impossibility; but Miss Ridley remained, if not humble, at any rate human, and although (thank Heaven!) she had her foibles, they were very harmless. One of her little weaknesses was the persuasion that she understood exactly how all the parents of her girls liked to be treated, causing her to make subtle modifications for each, often quite mistakenly and very amusing to spectators on such a day as this, when it was possible to be the observer and auditor of half a dozen of her Protean efforts in as many minutes. Not that Miss Ridley was insincere: far from it; she merely made a fetish of tact, and fancied her efforts in that direction too fondly.

Mr. Ingleside's humorous mouth and slightly ironical cast of expression called up in Miss Ridley instantly a mood of worldly wisdom tinged with raillery. But her native good sense was too much for her when it came to discussing his daughter.

"Dear Ann!" she said. "We shall all be so sorry to lose her. You bereave us so steadily, Mr. Ingleside. We are still mourning for Alison, you know. Dear Alison! She has so much feeling, so much sympathy, I am troubled for her in the rough air of life."

"But surely, Miss Ridley, that is where feeling and sympathy are wanted; and Alison is giving both where they are at this moment particularly needed — to her mother."

"True, of course, — poor Mrs. Ingleside! — but when one loves anyone — as we all loved Alison — one wants to preserve her from disillusion and suffering. To love is to wish to shelter."

"Ah yes, it is indeed," said Mr. Ingleside; "and I too share it. That is largely why I am going to take Ann. It is all arranged. She is to have this year with me. After that she might go abroad and learn some more if it seemed the right thing."

"Surely there can be no question . . .?" Miss Ridley exclaimed, all her finishing instincts roused.

"From one point of view, none," Mr. Ingleside said. "But what of me? Suppose that I find that I want her, as I find that I want her now? There is too much talk about sacrifice for children, Miss Ridley. I have surrendered my girls to their instructors too long. Here's Alison gone to the East for Heaven knows how long, with all kinds of love-sick exiles only too ready to propose to her. And in a year or so some young scoundrel will be making Ann fall in love with him, and then both will have gone altogether. Where do I come in? Other parents may like this kind of life, but not I. No; I consider that I have toiled long enough for my Rachel, and we are now going to make our home together."

"But, Mr. Ingleside," said Miss Ridley, "I see all that; I see your point of view perfectly; but there

is Ann's too. Think of what a child she is: only seventeen."

"She is grown up," said Mr. Ingleside. "Lots of boys are never men, but all girls are women, and a girl of seventeen is almost old. It is time she saw life. She is coming home with me now, to get to know me, and let me get to know her, and to meet my friends."

Miss Ridley said nothing for a moment.

"I know what you are thinking," said Mr. Ingleside, smiling. "Confess it: you are thinking that it is quite a question whether I am a fit companion for Ann at all?"

Miss Ridley laughed. "Oh no," she said. "Not that."

"Then my friends . . .? Ah, Miss Ridley, make no mistake. Ann will be in very excellent hands. Ann is to be envied . . ."

Miss Ridley sighed. In her heart she knew it, and she was not alone among school-mistresses in envying a departing pupil. For her, the task of continually preparing the young for life and bidding farewell to them on the threshold of that fascinating mansion; for her, the brief one-sided affection for these young things, doomed ever to be cut short just as it might develop into a mutual feeling. She was like the shipbuilder who has never himself put out to sea.

Miss Ridley did not encourage this vein. She became practical in self-defence. "Her languages," she said, "are not at all good; her music is sadly deficient."

Mr. Ingleside brushed aside these objections.

"I will see to it," he said, "that her French and German do not suffer.. She shall have the run of my books."

"Books!" exclaimed Miss Ridley. "You will choose them for her, I trust. Such dreadful licence across the Channel. . . . That thin yellow paper. . . . . Dear Ann . . ."

"I will be very careful," said Mr. Ingleside. "Hector Malot. Georges Ohnet. Pierre le Coulevain. She shall be kept English. She shall never bring discredit on Millais House."

"And the music?" Miss Ridley asked, with new anxiety.

"You would not have her kept wholly to English composers, I hope?" said Mr. Ingleside.

"Of course not," Miss Ridley replied. "That would be too stunting."

"And yet," said Mr. Ingleside, "that dreadful Continent! Is its literature alone representative? Does nothing characteristic creep into its music?"

"I don't think I understand," Miss Ridley faltered.

"Oh, it's all right," said Mr. Ingleside. "Only one is a little amused sometimes to contrast the riot of emotionalism permitted to our daughters on the piano with the scrupulous bloodlessness of the books we pick for them."

"I must confess," said Miss Ridley, "I had never thought of that; but I will do so in future. Every piece shall be played to me by Herr Grüber before it is given out. I shall then be able to detect any too emotional tendency. His touch is wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Ingleside. Quite a new idea."

Miss Ridley's conscience still troubled her. There was about Mr. Ingleside an air of intellectual ease, if not carelessness, a suggestion of smiling fatalism that in any ordinary man would of course be wholly reprehensible, but in the author of the best translation of Horace was fitting enough: yet was such a man the best guardian for a girl like Ann? Miss Ridley had in her favourite pupils much of the pride of the artist: they were largely her own creation. For the most part they were entering the ordinary life of the well-to-do girl between school and marriage; but Ann was different. Ann was going to live with this humorous semi-Bohemian gentleman free from all the restrictions and watchfulness that should surround the *jeune fille*. Miss Ridley's solicitude prompted her to protest a little more. "Mr. Ingleside," she said, "about this question . . . so prominent just now . . . this, ah, suffrage for women . . . have you any very strong views?"

"What line do you take here?" Mr. Ingleside asked in reply.

"Here, I am sorry to say, we are divided," said Miss Ridley. "I personally regret the movement, and yet of course I cannot help seeing that when women earn their own living, and are interested in social and political questions, they have a right to representation. My rates, you know . . . extremely heavy. Quite seventy pounds. . . . And it is of course on the face of it illogical to give women local representation and deny them central representation. . . . After all, Parliament, you know, is only a Town Council on a larger scale. And yet . . . I

do not see myself sitting on doorsteps all night to wait for a too stubborn statesman . . . so unmaidenly, so — so — unhygienic. . . . Cold stones, you know . . ."

Mr. Ingleside acquiesced.

"Nor do I care for the idea of women marching among crowds . . . militant women. . . . The sphere of a woman is, I think, the home. . . . She should radiate influence. . . . All my teaching has been to this effect, and my girls have done extremely well, some of them. . . . Muriel Grandforth, who married the South Pole explorer only the other day, was here, you know. . . . And yet I should find it very hard to condemn an earnest woman Poor Law Guardian, for example, for wishing to have a vote. . . . But you have not told me your opinion, Mr. Ingleside."

"Oh," said Mr. Ingleside, "I am rather of yours. I like the old-fashioned women best, but I have every sympathy with the new kind, when they really mean it and don't throw stones."

"And Ann?" Miss Ridley inquired anxiously.

"Ann shall make up her mind for herself," said Mr. Ingleside; "but whatever she does, I shall stand by her."

Miss Ridley sighed. "London . . ." she murmured.

Slowly the afternoon wore on. First came a performance in perfect French — perfect in that the members of the audience were given time to understand it, which is the great lack in France — of *Les Femmes Precieuses*, as prepared for school use.

Then a pianoforte solo by Miss Sadie Macdonald, a little dark-haired, olive-skinned Jewess, and a few songs and recitations; and lastly the distribution of rewards by the Right Reverend, who was jocular and earnest by turns, and always paternal and bland. Mr. Ingleside smiled queerly as the Bishop pronounced his fruity benediction and wished for all the girls a long and helpful life. He glanced along the rows of happy and excited young creatures. How would time and society deal with them, he wondered. For how many would their poor little bodies prove too much—bodies made so carefully and consciously by the Bishop's awful Ally and Employer. And some would die young, and one or two might be mothers of notable men, but most would merely increase the suburban census. Well!

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH GENTLEMEN'S PALATES ARE DISCUSSED, AND AGE WINS

ANN had never lived in the Buckingham Street house; she had spent part of her holidays there and no more. But now she was not only to live there, but to be its mistress and hostess. Mistress at least in name, for of course it was not to be expected that Mrs. Boody, after all these years of management, would allow a chit of a girl anything more than an illusion of control.

Mrs. Boody made her position secure at once, like a sensible woman. "And now, my dear," she said to Ann on the morning after her return, "you'll be wanting to take the thing into your own hands. Of course you will. Well, your pa likes his dinner at quarter to eight; what will you be giving him?"

Ann had the feeling of being against a brick wall. "What about beef?" she asked.

"Your pa doesn't like beef," said Mrs. Boody.

Ann saw light through the bricks; it came through the old, old loophole. "Mutton," she suggested hopefully.

"Your pa had mutton last evening; don't you remember?" said Mrs. Boody.

The brick wall turned to iron.

"Is there anything else?" Ann asked. "Oh yes, of course, veal."

"Your pa can't touch it," said Mrs. Boody. "He knows how it's prepared; though to my mind to object to one kind of meat on account of cruelty and eating the others is like straining at a camel and swallowing a needle. Years ago — before I met Boody — I once kept company with a young man who worked in a slaughter-house. I know."

Ann shuddered, and Mrs. Boody turned to matters less sanguinary.

"There's two kinds of clever gentlemen," she said — "those that will eat everything on their plates as quickly as possible, so as to be done with it; and those that are particular. Your pa's one of the particular ones. If he doesn't like a thing, he won't consider it for a moment. No, my dear, to-day's duckling day."

"Oh, of course: ducks," said Ann, "and chickens. How silly of me! And where do you get them?" she asked.

"There's a nice shop in Jermyn Street," said Mrs. Boody. "And the fishmonger's there too. What about fish?"

"Are there many kinds of fish?" asked Ann, thinking of Miss Ridley's brief repertory. "At school we always had plaice or cod."

"Don't get either of those for your pa, I beg of you," said Mrs. Boody. "Duckling being rich, what I should have got him for to-day would be a sole. Not a lemon sole, mind, but a real sole. Fried perfectly plain. He's a terror about fish, your pa is.

And, I implore you, never a whiting. Salmon he likes and turbot. I've known him not turn at halibut and hake. But don't offer him whiting or cod. When in doubt, a sole."

The thought crossed Ann's mind that Mrs. Boody had entirely forgotten that Mr. Ingleside would no longer be alone. If not precisely true, this was true enough. Mrs. Boody was one of those excellent women who were born to feed men, to think little of women's needs, and to pick up their own sustenance as they might, rarely in circumstances of comfort. May they continue strong enough to resist the new movement!

Ann sighed. "There's still the pudding," she said.

"Not yet," said Mrs. Boody. "Let's take them in order. We've been wrong once: with the fish, you know. We didn't get to that till after the meat, you remember: all wrong, my dear, all wrong. Before we come to the sweet there's the veg."

"Veg.?"

"Vegetables, my dear. Veg. they're called for short in the kitchen, although for that matter the full word doesn't take so very much time."

"I'd forgotten them," said Ann. "But they're not so difficult, are they? Potatoes, of course, and something green."

"Ah yes, my dear," said Mrs. Boody. "Potatoes. Right. But how done?" She looked arch and questioning.

Ann sank in a chair in desperation. Miss Ridley's idea of a cooked potato was a boiled potato. But of course this gourmet father of hers, this new and ex-

acting creature of whom she had never really thought before, this Lucullus of Buckingham Street, would want fancy tricks. "What do you think?" she asked weakly. "How many ways are there of doing potatoes?"

"There's boiling, peeled, and boiling in their jackets," said Mrs. Boody, checking them on her fat fingers. "There's fried in slices, and fried in strips. There's *sauté* and there's mashed. There's . . ."

"I like them mashed," said Ann.

"Not for your pa," said Mrs. Boody, "and not with duckling anyway. With cold beef, yes; but not with duckling. Small new with duckling, and green peas."

"But how do you know such things?" Ann asked.

Mrs. Boody smiled the superior smile of the initiated. "Well, my dear," she replied, "it's partly training as a cook, and it's partly observation. Training as a cook — I don't mean just Mrs. Beeton and that sort of thing, but what you pick up here and there — training as a cook tells you that potatoes should be fried with one kind of meat, boiled with another, and so on. But that's only half the battle with a gentleman like your pa. Your pa can be learned only by being studied, and studied, I may say, for years. I know him, and I'll tell you for why. Because I've been his housekeeper so long, and I've used my eyes and my head. Nothing but experience, my dear, could do it."

Ann sighed a deep sigh. "Not much chance for me," it said. But she still persevered. "The pudding?" she asked.

"Ah yes," said Mrs. Boody, sighing too, "the pudding! And that's where we find the real trouble. Your pa's a heart-breaker over sweets. We get him the most beautiful things you ever dreamed of, and he reads a book till they're cold, and then says he doesn't like them. If I were a strong character, I wouldn't give him sweets at all; but then I'm so weak. I can't bear to think of him not having the chance at a *soufflé* or something nice if he were minded to. Because you know when he dines out he eats sweets right enough and likes them, and I can't bear to think of his saying in some other house, 'Why, do you have sweets? How lucky you are!' because that's just what he would do. He says all that comes into his head — so different from you and me, my dear. And then what sort of opinion would they have of me as a housekeeper?"

"And you have to think out these dreadful meals every day, Mrs. Boody?" Ann exclaimed. "How terrible! And how frightfully clever of you! Really, I don't think it's any use for me to begin just yet, not till I have been here for awhile and had a chance to see what papa likes. Please go on doing it."

After a little discussion Mrs. Boody consented to do so; and having won her little battle so gracefully, and established so firmly the relative positions of herself and Ann, she settled down to talk.

"I've done for lots of gentlemen in my time," she said, "but none more of a gentleman than your pa, my dear, although one was an Honourable. Think of it, my dear, the second son of a peer, and took Worcester sauce with everything. What was the

use of cooking for such as that? No palate at all; entirely gone: burnt up. And no liver either, the doctor said. He left Boody all his clothes; but he was so thin that Boody, who was a fine man, couldn't wear anything but the neckties and braces, and the neckties were so sad-coloured that he gave them away."

"Where is Mr. Boody now?" Ann inquired.

"Don't ask me, my dear," said Mrs. Boody. "He left me ten years ago. He walked out of the house one day, and I've never set eyes on him since."

"Perhaps he met with an accident," Ann suggested.

"No, my dear, I am afraid not," said Mrs. Boody. "I can't tell you everything, such a child as you are; but he didn't meet with an accident — at least, not the kind you mean — and he didn't go alone. I've got over it now; so much so that when she came back, not so long ago, I had a cup of tea with her. If that's not forgiveness, I don't know what is. He's in America, my dear, with another. A fine man and a kind man, but a rover. Ah, my dear, life's all before you.

"My boy has gone too," Mrs. Boody went on, with a sigh. "It's three years since I heard from him. He's a valet now somewhere, but where, I've no notion. My last letter to him was returned."

"Were you very fond of him?" Ann asked.

"He was a dear little boy," said Mrs. Boody, "when he was small. But he got wild. He liked his companions more than me. He used to come

now and then to see me when he was in his first place. I asked him once how he liked gentlefolks. 'Mother,' he said, and I've always remembered it; 'Mother,' he said, 'they're just the same as we are, only they change their socks oftener.' Many's the time I've laughed over that; and not so wrong neither. Ah well! it's hard to keep your children anyhow, but I didn't think to lose both husband and son and have them living. One likes to be wanted more than that."

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH THERE IS NOTHING BUT TALK

A FEW days after Ann had settled down, Mr. Ingleside called upon Mrs. Campion in Buckingham Gate. Mrs. Campion lived in one of the Georgian houses in that pleasant spot, where the voice of the bugle is so often heard and military music is such a common occurrence that not even the youngest housemaid dashes to the window. Mrs. Campion and Mr. Ingleside had long been friends, but only quite recently had she settled in London, having returned, a widow, from India during the previous year. Hence, although she was acquainted with the peculiarities of the Ingleside *ménage*, she knew none of the family but himself.

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, as he sank into an armchair, "I've done it. She's here."

"And how do you like it?" Mrs. Campion asked.

"She's a dear," said Mr. Ingleside, "but I'm bewildered. What am I to do with her? What is she to do with herself? It would be all right if Alison were here too. She has brought responsibility into the house."

"Of course," said Mrs. Campion. "That's entirely what children are for, and largely what houses are for. If you don't want responsibility, don't have either."

"As to the children," said Mr. Ingleside, "I observe many people taking the maxim to heart. You might go farther back, and say don't marry; but it would be so contemptibly cowardly—and yet the Perfect Man was a bachelor. A state that prohibited marriage until its men were forty would quickly cease to be. Fortunately, the fear of responsibility is not yet quite general."

"Why are you happy men always so bitter?" Mrs. Campion inquired. "There was a time when one went to miserable men for that kind of thing."

"Ann makes me envious too," said Mr. Ingleside. "It must be so splendid and interesting to be young and see everything fresh."

"Yes," said Mrs. Campion.

"And believe in everything too," Mr. Ingleside continued. "That's what really hurts—to have lost belief in things. One does not notice the loss so much until one is brought in daily and hourly contact with a clean young nature on the threshold."

"Well," said Mrs. Campion, "you can't have it both ways. You can't have innocence and knowledge at the same time. One had much better try to be one's age, and be sweet in it, than cry over spilt years. As a matter of fact, no one ever really was as young as Ann. You at this moment are as near it as anyone could be, just through wanting it intelligently."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Why, only this: that there's no point in being young unconsciously, and the young are necessarily young unconsciously. The only fun in being young

is knowing you are young, and glorying in it accordingly; and no one ever did that. In fact, you can't begin to do it until you're old."

"That's metaphysics," sighed Mr. Ingleside, "but I see what you mean. I must cease to envy. You're right there. No one really knows how to live until he does that; but, my dear, it's an awful thing to be the father of a grown-up daughter—a Miss."

"It wouldn't be if you weren't so spoilt and exacting," said Mrs. Campion. "If you'd learned to take things as they come, it would be perfectly natural for you to feel like a father. But you want everything your way, instead of Nature's way or the world's way."

"My dear lady," Mr. Ingleside retorted, stung by the truth, "I am not exacting. All I want is to be comfortable."

"Not at all; all you want is perfection, fortified by preferential treatment from every one. As a matter of fact, it's only the fear of losing that which makes you so terrified of growing old and unattractive."

Mr. Ingleside frowned, and Mrs. Campion changed the subject.

"Send Ann to me soon, won't you?" she said. "I want to study her."

"There's nothing to study," Mr. Ingleside replied. "She's as transparent as . . ."

"Oh you foolish man!"

"Oh, of course," he retorted, "you'll find potentialities. Naturally! Sex dormant, and all the rest of it. That's your line of country. But they'll

be in your own eyes. That's your besetting sin: to believe people are what you want them to be. You're an incorrigible romancer. But I tell you on my word of honour as a father and a C.B. that Ann is a very ordinary English girl, with a warm heart and a candid nature. I'm not sure I shall let her come and see you at all. You're too worldly."

"I?"

"Yes, you. I don't mean you're a cynic: nothing so healthy. You're so convinced that women were born to be married and men born to marry them that you can't think of anything else. Confess that the first thing you look at when you meet a girl is her ring finger."

"No harm in that."

"Yes, there is, a great deal of harm in it, for my daughter."

"Well," said Mrs. Campion, quite unruffled, "I'll see her first. In fact, I must see her. She must have some good influence to counteract all the old bachelor cranks that you gather round you. You can't take a girl away from a healthy school and mew her up in rooms off the Strand, with a kind of inverted mothers' meeting always going on, and expect her to be well and jolly. She must have some fun and some exercise. John will be back from Oxford very soon, and he shall take her about."

"John!" said Mr. Ingleside. "John be blowed! I'll take her about."

"You're no good at all," said Mrs. Campion. "You get too tired, and Ann never gets tired. Confess it."

"I don't think she does, confound her!" said her father. "But John will only fall in love with her and be a nuisance; and I won't want her to be bothered that way for a long time."

"John will be all right," said John's mother. "If he does fall in love with her, it won't hurt either of them. It will do her no harm, and it will improve John's manners."

"I must look at him again first," said Mr. Ingleside. "But I may say at once that it does not excite me in the least to have brought up a daughter at, I may say, great expense, in order that she may, by existing to be flirted with, improve the deportment of other people's sons — even yours. That seems to me carrying altruism to a point of absurdity."

Mrs. Campion laughed. "Very good," she said. " 'He was a most sarcastic man, this quiet Mr. Brown.' But for a fatalist," she added, "you are very impatient. If it is written that John's manners are to be improved by your second daughter, why rebel?"

"Oh, confound John's manners!" said Mr. Ingleside. "I'm tired of this. Seriously," he continued, "let me tell you that I am more than ever convinced that the whole business of fatherhood is a fraud. I have never had any real companionship with either of my girls yet. They began with nurses in the nursery; they went on with school-mistresses at school; and now, the minute I take Ann away for the one purpose of being with her, you threaten me with a son-in-law. Really, I think that fathers are

the most unselfish people in the world; they're nothing but Nature's agents, and Nature is interested only in the young."

"You were young once," said Mrs. Campion. "You can't stand still."

"I suppose not," Mr. Ingleside replied. "That's what's the matter with it. Life is in such a desperate hurry. It is terrible to be the playthings of a Power that seems to be just as much in love with decay as with vitality. I have heard preachers declare that nothing is so wonderful and impressive as the growth and perfection of that beautiful structure, the human body; but it's a professional lie. There is something far more wonderful and impressive, and that is the wanton, wasteful destruction of it."

"Well," said Mrs. Campion, "don't be too serious. That's the best way out of such difficulties. Don't look ahead so much. Take things as they come. And for mercy's sake don't talk to Ann like that and poison her young mind."

"I won't," said Mr. Ingleside. "But picking words is dead out of my line."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Campion. "Preferential treatment again. Anyone else would have been taught better manners; but you — you're just encouraged."

"Who encourages me?" Mr. Ingleside demanded.

"Every one," said Mrs. Campion. "I for one."

He laughed. "You ought to have more strength of mind," he said.

"Of course," she answered, "but there you have it. That's the last criticism on most men and all women."

"How much," Mr. Ingleside asked, "ought I to allow her for dress?"

"Does she like clothes?"

"She looks very nice, I think."

"I should put fifty pounds into the bank and give her a cheque book and say it was to last for six months, and see what happens. She'll be all the better mother some day for having had the experience."

"Mother! Do forget your desire for every one to be a mother."

"Why are you so obstinate?" Mrs. Campion replied. "You are old enough and clever enough and enough of a father to stop resisting Nature like this."

"Very likely. But one must be very much more in love with this world than I am to wish more children to be born into it."

"That's indigestion," said Mrs. Campion. "You mustn't talk like that. Take the world as it comes, and don't criticize. But you criticize everything. You'd criticize the literary style of the codicil that left you a fortune."

"Yes, and you'd tolerate everything. We're probably both equally wrong."

Mr. Ingleside drove back in one of the few remaining hansoms in London, and having no change gave the driver a florin for a shilling fare. This so delighted the man — already perhaps a little predisposed to sociability by one of the alcoholic lenitives that London holds out towards the superseded and unhappy on every hand — that he settled down to

conversation as steadily as though Buckingham Street were a *salon;* and Mr. Ingleside allowed him to go on, partly from sheer good-humour and a certain pity for these out-moded Jehus, and partly from a natural weakness for a character.

"Lord love me, sir," the driver said, with the Londoner's elision, "if every one was like you, what a pleasure cab-driving would be. But there, they're not. Only this morning I had two old ladies to drive from the Grand Hotel to the Natural History Museum and back again. They took me for an hour, and they got back exactly to the minute. And what do you think they gave me? Half a crown."

"But that's the fare," said Mr. Ingleside: "one hour, half a crown. They probably were strangers to London, and having seen it in the regulations, thought it was the proper amount."

"Right you are, sir," said the cabman. "I thought something was up on the way back, and I opened the trap-door and catched them breaking their necks trying to read the tariff. So I was prepared for the worst. But what part of England do you suppose people come from that don't give a cabman a penny for himself?"

He paused to gather fresh impetus. "Do you think they'd treat a taxi-driver like that? Not arf. Look at those shovers! They never say a civil word to anyone, but who dares ask one of them for any change out of a bob, even if there's only eightpence on the clock? Oo? No one."

The driver leaned down to bring his head closer to Mr. Ingleside. "What is it about those shovers,"

he asked mysteriously, "that makes them so different from us? Why are people so frightened of them?"

Mr. Ingleside murmured something about machinery, unknown forces, and so forth.

"Yes, I dare say that's part of it; but do you suppose if I was to learn to shove," said the cabman, "anyone would be afraid of me? Nar! It's more than that. Smoke cigarettes, too, all the time, and have more meals in a day than I get in a week, and pass on the wrong side. I dunno what London's coming to."

The driver shook his head tragically.

"You don't mind me talking, I hope?" he said. "It isn't costing anything, you know — not like talking to a taxi, what's going on all the time!"

Mr. Ingleside laughed.

"But that's not all about those two old ladies," the driver resumed. "What do you think they did? They didn't give me the half-crown themselves; they nipped indoors and sent it out by the porter. There's lots of different kinds of meanness in fares — there's the fares what are 'so sorry they haven't got any coppers'; there's the fares that think that giving the driver an old newspaper is enough to make him their slave; there's the fares what pat your horse and ask questions about it, and then offer a bare bob; but of all the mean tricks, getting the porter to pay you is the worst. That's mean twice over: because, to begin with, it's mean, just mean; and secondly, there's the porter's meanness too in not sticking up for the cabman and telling the people

that the fare by itself's not enough. That's what I complain of. But no, he just hands it to me, and says the ladies give it him for me for an hour's hire, and grins, and off he goes back to his arm-chair and the *Daily Mail*."

The cabman sighed.

"Fancy giving a man an hour's fare for an hour's hire!" he concluded. "England's breaking up; that's what I say."

Ann had her fifty pounds in a nice new bank almost opposite the top of Buckingham Street, where, considering that her visits were wholly confined to extracting money and never to depositing any more, she was curiously popular. The clerks indeed competed for her, almost as if they had a commission on her withdrawals. "How will you have it?" they used to ask (and is there a sweeter question?), and display as they counted it out the minutest interest in the weather not only of to-day but of yesterday and to-morrow. After all, it is the clerks with the shovels who are the salt of the earth.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH A MATTER-OF-FACT YOUNG WOMAN STEPS OUT TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

ANN was not long in learning that her father had lived alone for so long that there was literally nothing that she could do for him except be cheery and listen well. She therefore turned her thoughts towards doing something for herself, and was not sorry when Mr. Ingleside asked her one morning at breakfast if she intended to work for her living.

"Not that I want any of the money," he said; "but every one should do something and if possible earn something. It makes you independent."

"I should love to do something," said Ann.

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, "what can you do? Can you sing?"

Ann said she couldn't sing.

"Can you play the piano well enough to be a professional?"

Ann laughed.

"Can you act?"

Ann couldn't act for, I believe she said, nuts.

"Can you dance in bare feet?"

Ann laughed again.

"Can you paint?"

Ann couldn't paint — also for nuts.

"Do you want to write?"

Ann didn't want to write.

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, "you are abnormal. A freak. You must make your income by exhibiting yourself. 'The girl who doesn't want to write.' But," he added, "that's the end. We have exhausted the arts. Now we come to the lower walks of life open to women. Can you trim hats?"

Ann did not want to trim hats.

"Can you devise creations?"

Ann didn't want to do that.

"Can you teach?"

Ann shuddered.

"Can you read aloud to old ladies?"

Ann thought not.

"You are very limited," said her father. "I seem to have wasted a great deal of money at Millais House. You can't even drive, can you? They have lady *cochers* in Paris. It is very clear that whatever you decide to do must be preceded by more lessons. Well, I shall leave it to you to look about and tell me what you intend to try."

"Father," said Ann a few mornings later, "I'm on the track of a job."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Ingleside.

"Yes, listen. It's an advertisement which I answered."

"Answered?"

"Yes. You said every girl should earn her own living. Listen —

"'To Lovers of Dogs. A refined and entertaining home is offered to a lady who will help in looking after pedigree dogs. XX Office of this paper.'"

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, "but what about earning your own living? I observe no reference to salary."

"But I should be relieving you of my board and lodging," said Ann.

"Have I asked to be relieved?" Mr. Ingleside replied. "Moreover, you came here to keep me company."

"I know that," said Ann, "and of course I wouldn't leave you for anything. But I knew you'd like me to be independent and answer the advertisement. It might lead to something really profitable. I might at any rate learn something about breeding dogs, and that is a real business now, you know. There was a girl at school whose mother dressed entirely on their French poodle's puppies. Why shouldn't I breed dogs too?"

"Not in Buckingham Street, I hope," said her father.

"Oh, father, you're so practical!" Ann exclaimed. "You never want anything unexpected or unusual."

Mr. Ingleside sighed. "I did once," he said. "Don't forget that I'm a very old man. Well, what was the reply?"

Ann informed him that XX had answered that if Miss Ingleside would come to Reigate by the 10.15 train on Tuesday, she would find a varnished pony-cart at the station, which would convey her to the refined and entertaining home.

This being Tuesday, Ann trotted up to Charing Cross full of excitement. At Reigate station the pony-cart was duly waiting, so small as to be much

more like a mouse-trap, containing an elderly lady with solid masses of yellow curls, and a swollen pug beside her.

"Miss Ingleside, I presume?" said the lady.

Ann acquiesced.

"I am Mrs. Bonham-Hervey," said the lady. "It is about two miles from here. Jump in."

Ann took her so literally that her impact nearly lifted the pony off its feet as the shafts flew up; and off they went.

"I hope you like pugs," said the lady. "Although it doesn't really matter, as pugs are not in our line. Dear Siegfried here is just a pet, a comrade. Aren't you, darling?" she added, addressing the pug, who replied with an asthmatic wheeze and a futile effort to get any movement into his curling tail. "We go in," Mrs. Bonham-Hervey continued, "for toy poms, schipperkes, Pekinese spaniels, and Yorkshire terriers. Major Bonham-Hervey, my husband, says they're insects and not dogs at all, but that's only his wit. They're darlings really, and my sister and I adore them."

They stopped at a white gate in the midst of a shrubbery. Ann opened it and followed the cart up a dark and damp drive with weeds luxuriating all over it, to a small once white house from which the cement was peeling. In a deck-chair on the top step sat an elderly man with a furiously red face and a bristling grey moustache, reading a paper.

"Renton," said the lady, "this is Miss Ingleside."

The Major growled something which might have been "good-morning," and watched his wife lead

the mouse-trap behind the house in the direction of a raging medley of barking and yapping.

"I hope you'll like this place," said the Major. "I don't. Do you hear them? More like insects than dogs, I call them. My idea of a dog is a blood-hound or a Great Dane. Insects!"

"May I go and see them?" Ann asked.

"There's no one to stop you," said the Major: "but I wouldn't hasten that ordeal if I were you. The swine!"

"But why do you keep them if you so dislike them?" Ann asked, with the tactlessness of her years and nature.

The Major grew purple. "Because this is a damned ungrateful country," he said. "A parcel of mean hounds. Because its miserable half-pay has got to be eked out somehow. That's why. Do you suppose I'd live here at all if I could help it? In this wilderness? Not me. But toy poms and all the rest of it are profitable, and my wife is very clever with them. Do you play Bridge?"

The last question came so abruptly and with so little relation to what had preceded it that Ann was incapable at once of answering.

"Do you play Bridge?" the Major repeated, this time far more in the tone a choleric man uses to his wife than to a total stranger.

"No," said Ann, "I don't. I can play picquet, though, and bezique."

"Picquet and bezique! No good to me," said the Major. "And I told them to put Bridge in the advertisement, too! Fools! I never can get any-

thing done as I want it. Do you learn card games easily?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so," said Ann.

He brightened a little.

"There's nothing to do here at night," he explained.

In the parlour, where they had lunch, Ann noticed that the carpet had patches of white thread in many places, and everything suggested a want of money and the want of hope that often goes with it. Every time the door opened fresh dogs scampered in. Over her tinned tongue Ann learned what her duties would be. Miss Anstruther, Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's sister, it seemed, who had helped with the dogs for some years ("Dogs, did you call them?" interpolated the Major, "I always call them insects, Miss Ingleside. My idea of a dog is a bloodhound or a Great Dane"), Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's sister was no longer strong enough for the fatigue of travelling to the shows as she used to do, and it was therefore necessary for a substitute to be found. The old way was for Mrs. Bonham-Hervey to stay at home and take charge of the kennels, while her sister travelled about with the exhibits and sat by their cages. But her sister was now compelled to give it up.

Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's sister, who had hair as solid and yellow as Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's, but was obviously older and less robust, corroborated. It was the most delightful life, she said. They were such darlings; it broke her heart to have to stop. But — here she fluttered and twittered a little and

replenished her tumbler from the decanter and the syphon — her heart was so weak. She had such constant sinkings. She set down her glass, and, lifting the swollen pug to her lap, exchanged an affectionate embrace with it. She then kissed three other dogs in turn, full on their mouths, as if to emphasize the perfection of the relationship between them and the household. Meanwhile, not to be outdone, Mrs. Bonham-Hervey presented Siegfried with scraps from the darker and stringier part of the tongue.

"You might have given Miss Ingleside something better than this," said the Major. "Miss Ingleside, I apologize for such a shabby meal. I'm sure," he resumed to his wife, "that I saw the butcher's cart drive up this morning."

Mrs. Bonham-Hervey threw Ann a glance intended at once to deprecate and explain the unreasonableness of men, and informed her husband that it was true that the butcher had been, but it was only to bring some odds and ends for Iseult, who, being about to add a number of valuable puppies to the stock-in-trade of the house, had been ordered by the vet to have nourishing food. "Poor Iseult!" she added.

"Yes," said her sister, "poor Iseult! The sweetest lady-dog that ever drew breath, Miss Ingleside, and the kindest of mothers."

"Iseult, I may tell you, Miss Ingleside," said the Major, "is in my opinion the most detestable little bitch that an inscrutable Providence ever set on four legs. She is a Yorkshire terrier by name, but I call

her an insect. Nothing less. An insect. Certainly the word dog — a good honest word — if it is used with any force or fitness, of a Great Dane, say, or a bloodhound, never ought to be given to a midge like that. A midge, a mosquito, a gnat! In short, an insect."

"My husband is so funny," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey. "He will have his joke. He always calls our dogs insects. And it's all because he won't take any pains with them, Miss Ingleside. A dog must be wooed quite as much as a human being. But my husband won't take any pains with them at all. He expects them all to love him at sight, and if they don't, he gets cross with them."

"I don't expect it," said the Major, "and I don't want it. So far from wanting it, I spread Keating on myself to keep them away."

Both the ladies laughed gaily. "Isn't he funny?" Mrs. Bonham-Hervey asked. "He doesn't really mean it, though. He's as pleased as he can be when they have puppies."

Possibly the recollection of the important part played by puppies in his otherwise too frugal life affected the Major; in any case, his next remark was more friendly to the kennel.

"Yes," he said, "but what kind of puppies shall we be having soon with the country in the state that this is! Do you know, Miss Ingleside, that every day the strain of Pekinese spaniels and schipperkes, and in fact all foreign dogs, — Borzois too, — is deteriorating?"

Ann had no notion.

"It is so," the Major barked at her. "And why? Because one of the infernal Governments under which we are so vilely oppressed prohibited the importation of dogs, except with restrictions that are unbearably vexatious and expensive. What does that mean?"

Ann again had no notion.

"It means too much inbreeding," said the Major. "Too much inbreeding." He fixed Ann with his dull glare, and his face was like a beetroot.

Ann, however, was lost. Her knowledge of dogs was of the shallowest. All that she knew was that she liked them and they liked her.

The Major perceived her difficulty, and made a gentlemanly and tactful effort to enlighten her. "If there are no new dogs coming into England," he said, "we must go on with the old ones, which gradually, as they die off, become fewer. That means that the puppies have a tendency to become related, and too nearly related — members of a single family that gets smaller and smaller and smaller every year, and, as the result of this want of invigorating new blood, weaker and punier in character and frame each year. Now do you understand?"

Ann was still in a muddle, but her instinct told her it was time to affect apprehension, and this she successfully did.

"And so," the Major concluded, "you may imagine what it will be soon. The schipperke, who, at its best, is, I hold, an insect, will soon be such a midge that even my wife and Miss Anstruther here will admit it."

"Never!" the ladies laughingly exclaimed. "Never!"

"Wait and see," said the Major.

"Well," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey, after the Major had filled his pipe and left them, "do you think you would like to join us? We should treat you just as one of ourselves; you would have your own room; and travelling expenses to the shows would of course be paid."

"There would be no salary?" Ann asked.

"Oh no, we do not want anyone that is in need of money. We offer a home and an absorbingly interesting hobby."

"I don't think it would be quite what I want," said Ann, realizing that frankness was the best policy.

"And why not, pray?" Mrs. Bonham-Hervey asked sharply.

"I don't think I should be happy here," said Ann. "I don't care for the country, and the dogs are not the kind I like best. I like larger dogs. And another thing is the want of salary. I have a very nice home as it is; I should not leave it unless I was earning something."

"Think again," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey. "You are making a mistake, I am sure. I tell you for your good. I like you. You'd have done well with us. My husband likes you — I could see it at once. He is rarely so gay with strangers. Didn't you notice," she said to her sister, "how Renton took to Miss Ingleside?"

"Yes," said her sister, adding, "and it isn't as if

you were always here. Think of the pleasant travelling about and the excitements of the shows. Very often they're opened by Royalty, you know; and the very best people compete. Our little Sigurd, who's already won eighteen firsts, — darling Sigurd!" — she picked up a tiny spaniel and crushed it against her face — "when we were at Sevenoaks had the next cage to the Princess Schwallenstein's pet pom, and she and I became exceedingly friendly. A most delightful creature. I say again, as I have said before, that dog-fancying can bring one the most charming acquaintances in the world — apart altogether from profit. You remember, Amy dear, how nice the Duchess was when she wanted Iseult to be her little Kitchener's wee wifie? Could anyone have been more affable or more considerate? I assure you I have always looked forward to the shows with the keenest anticipation. I have so many friends there — you would only have to mention my name. Not only among the dog-fanciers — oh dear, no! Among the cat-fanciers too. There's Miss Shunstone of Richmond, who has the Blue Persians. We have a compact always to have tea together on the first day. Miss Shunstone must make as much as three hundred a year out of her stud. No, Miss Ingleside, you make a great mistake not to join us. The introductions I could give you!"

Ann, however, succeeded at last in convincing the ladies that by no she meant no; and having assimilated this truth, their interest in her vanished.

"I'm very sorry," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey,

"but this afternoon unfortunately there's no one to drive you to the station. The Major and I have an engagement, and our man is ill. The best train is at 5.04."

Ann met the Major a little way from the house.

"Well," he said, "are you coming to live with us?"

Ann assured him that she was not.

He said he was sorry. "If I had known you were going," he said, "I would have driven you in. If you'll wait now, I'll put the pony in and overtake you. I have nothing to do."

"Oh yes, you have," said Ann. "You're going to take Mrs. Bonham-Hervey somewhere to call."

"Did she say that?" said the Major, with a sigh. "Lord, what a sex!"

"Well, I must hurry on," said Ann, by no means anxious to hear the Major on his wife's foibles.

She therefore walked briskly back to Reigate, happy in her liberty, and happy also, like a good daughter, in the knowledge that she had a really interesting story to tell at dinner that night. Who would look ahead farther than that?

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH A GRANDMOTHER ASKS QUESTIONS AND SUPPLIES ANSWERS

MR. INGLESIDE'S mother lived at Hove; which was called Brighton when the late King stayed there, but is as distinct from Brighton, in fact, as A is distinct from B. Of course, Ann had to visit her grandmother early in the holidays, for old Mrs. Ingleside had an almost Chinese respect for progenitor-worship and even exacted from her son a daily letter, which, however difficult an ordeal to ordinary creatures, is no great hardship to a Government official. Mr. Ingleside preferred writing to visiting; but he occasionally ran down to dinner by the five o'clock from Victoria, and was at home again by midnight, having an increasing distaste for sleeping in other people's houses.

Although an old lady of seventy-seven, Mrs. Ingleside was so active and keen as to send her companion to bed thoroughly tired out almost every night: what with walking, driving, shopping, discussing, and reading aloud. Mrs. Ingleside possessed a landau in which, open or closed, she drove out each afternoon; and it was on these drives that her conversational powers were at their brightest. Why it is that the landau has no power to tire some

people, and is so deadly a foe to others, I cannot explain; but so it is. Mrs. Ingleside descended from it at tea-time invigorated in mind and body: her guests staggered to their bedrooms in a stupor of fatigue, of which, however, she was unconscious.

Ann reached her grandmother's house in its silent avenue just before lunch, and immediately after that meal the carriage came round from the neighbouring mews, a foot-warmer and rugs were taken out, Mrs. Ingleside and Ann were tucked carefully within, and Miss Airey, the companion, returned to the house with a light heart, free for once to do as she would for two hours.

"Now, tell me all the news," said Mrs. Ingleside. "How is your dear father? It must be ten days since I saw him, not since I sprained my thumb. It's better now; Dr. Steele is so clever. And your mother, have you heard from her? And dear Alison? What a long way to go to get health! Much better come and live here, although I can't say that that would be too comfortable, perhaps. Worthing, let's say, or Eastbourne, or even Hastings. I'm told that Littlehampton is bracing. But Bournemouth, my dear, so relaxing. No wonder your mother's not strong. Still, Japan's a very long journey. And suppose it was very rough? I don't know how it would affect your mother, but I can't help feeling that dear Alison is a very poor sailor. Poor child, to think of her straining herself in those terrible 'roaring forties,' don't they call them? As for myself, in the days when I used to go to the Continent with your grandfather, I kept

my hand on the stewardess's wrist all the way across.

"But you're not telling me anything about yourself. You are going to be father's housekeeper now, I suppose; but how about the rest of the day? Don't neglect your studies, my dear, just because you've left school. Your music — I hope you practise every day. Two hours at least, I believe, are necessary. And singing. You do sing, don't you? There is nothing to my mind so beautiful as singing. I remember hearing Jenny Lind. It was wonderful — so pure and so sweet. That's such a nice story of some one asking Jenny Lind what she was thinking about at the foot of the cross in one of her great parts, and she saying so simply, 'I think I was thinking about the trimming of my new bonnet.' That shows the artistic temperament, dear. No need to tear oneself to rags. Poor Jenny Lind, I think she married some one named Goldsmith.

"And Adelaide Neilson, I remember her too. Poor girl, she drank some iced milk and died from it. Do be careful, my dear, about very cold drinks when you are hot.

"I always go to the concerts here. They have very good ones at the Dome — Clara Butt, you know — but it's a long time since I heard an opera singer — Tetrazzini, my dear — and now that this man Strauss is all the rage, I don't know when I shall go again. Wagner was bad enough, but this 'Elektra' seems terrible, and the funny thing is that Wagner is now talked about as if he were a kind of German Verdi.

"But you're not telling me anything, my dear. You keep up your drawing, of course. Don't let that go. Such a beautiful pastime, and so useful too in after life. I'm sure if I had not made sketches when your grandfather and I were abroad I shouldn't have the slightest recollection of some of the places we went to. But now I have only to turn to my album to recall in a moment Thun and Interlaken, Lucerne and Milan. Though of course Milan is easy to remember on account of its beautiful cathedral. So white, my dear.

"And that reminds me, what church do you go to in London? Don't tell me you stay at home like your dear father. Why he is so careless of such things I cannot understand, for I'm sure I brought him up carefully enough, except perhaps for a little laxity about the Athanasian creed, which I never could enjoy, and I'm sure never shall. Still, he's a good man, and even if he doesn't go to church I hope you do. The Abbey isn't very far, is it? You might go there, but I sometimes wonder whether perhaps they're not a little too clever. Perhaps a simpler church would be better — St. Margaret's, say; but now I come to think of it, the St. Margaret's preacher is at the Abbey too. Well, my dear, wherever you go I hope it will do you good.

"And all those funny men that your dear father knows, how are they? That Mr. Oast is in Parliament again, I see. There are too many Labour members, in my opinion. When I was young, Parliament was a place for gentlemen; but everything's changed now. What your dear father can

see in a Labour member to make a friend of him, I can't think; and it seems to me unwise too, for if his Government department got to hear of it, there might be trouble. And the old doctor, how is he? How much better it would have been to have gone on seeing patients and doing good than to retire and keep a kind of museum like that. The world's full enough of illness and suffering, Heaven knows. There's poor Miss Airey can't get rid of her neuralgia, and very likely an old man like that could help her. The young men are all right for the operations and so forth, but when it comes to old-fashioned ailments or worry, give me an old doctor. Experience, you know, my dear.

"And that idle artist man with the funny name, how is he? Lord Ramer, is it? No, Vycount. I can't imagine what his parents were about to give him such a name as that. I've heard some odd names: the poor women when I was a girl used to call their babies after the battles in the Crimean war, Sebastopol and so forth; but Vycount is most ridiculous. So misleading, my dear. I never saw any of his pictures or met anyone who had. Mark my words, my dear, the best pictures are painted by the men with the simplest names. Your grandfather had a beautiful portrait by Benjamin West, and what could be better than those noble sheep and cows by Thomas Sidney Cooper?

"And that nice quiet man, Mr. Thrace, I hope he's quite well. From what I know of him, I like him much the best of your dear father's friends. He called here last Easter, when he was on a visit to

Brighton, and brought me a beautiful bunch of tulips. I remember a strange remark he made. 'How refreshing,' he said, 'to find a house with the *Standard* in it.' The *Standard* — it has been my paper for thirty years, and I want no other; and for a sensible man, as Mr. Thrace seems to be, to say that, shows what we're all coming to.

"Well, my dear, here we are at home again, and I've had a very delightful talk with you. It's so seldom that anyone comes who can really give me the news I want to hear. Miss Airey is an intelligent person, but she has no real conversation."

"Grandmamma seems very well just now," said Ann to the companion, when she found her alone.

"Never better," said Miss Airey, with a sigh.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH WE FIND SOME ANCIENT REMEDIES, AND CHRISTIE LOOKS BACK

ALL Mr. Ingleside's friends were bibliophiles in a small way: that is to say, they could no more pass a second-hand book-shop on the run than a cricketer can avoid pausing for a moment to watch a game, even if the stumps are a tin and the bat a strip of packing-case. Any little odd find was invariably displayed on the following Friday; and on the evening that we have now reached Ramer had a trifling discovery to exploit.

"My book," said the artist, "cost me two-pence, but it carries with it secrets enough to keep me in perpetual affluence if only I had the necessary cheek. It is called *A Thousand Notable Things*, and it contains certain cures for everything, and a number of miscellaneous and useful counsels too. It is both old and curious. The doctor here would have had no chance if I had set up against him with my twopenny book to take the place of his costly degrees. Say you had a sore throat, and you rang the Staminer bell. The door (after a long time) was opened, and you were shown into a stuffy room full of the illustrated papers and *Punch*. After a while the doctor consented to see you. Not that he was busy, but it looked better to keep you waiting. And

then what did he do? He wrote you a prescription for an expensive and very dull bottle of medicine which would have made you worse, and then he robbed you of all the money he could get.

"But suppose," Ramer went on, "you had come to me, what should I have done? Ah, I should have sent you away with a delightfully interesting task before you — to cure yourself, beyond question, — but how? By catching swallows. Why? Because my book says that 'a plaister made of the powder of burned swallows and of their nest, doth help effectually the swelling of the throat or quinancy.' 'But,' you would have said, 'I can't catch swallows.' That's where you touch the comprehensiveness of my knowledge. 'Can't you?' I should have replied, all ready for you, 'then listen;' and turning to page 106 of my book, I should have read to you as followeth: —

'If you will make birds drunk, that you may catch them with your hands, take such meat as they love, as wheat or beans, or such like, and lay them to steep in the lees of wine, or in the juice of hemlock, and sprinkle the same in the place where the birds use to haunt; and if they do eat thereof, straightways they will be so giddy, that you may take them with your hands. I wrote this out of an old written book, wherein I know many true things were written.'

There you are."

"The odd thing to me," said Dr. Staminer, "about those old medicine books, is how some of the remedies ever came to be thought of. One can understand that a man who was ill was always ready to try anything; but how did the author hit

on swallows? To begin with, it limits the cure to the summer months; and then, why swallows' nests?"

"Probably," said Mr. Ingleside, "it was a sheer effort of fancy on the part of the doctor, who was of course largely a ju-ju man. He had to be fantastic in order to suggest a knowledge that he did not possess and thus obtain influence and respect. Swallows are difficult to catch, and their nests must be very nasty; the whole idea of making a physic from them was so strange as in itself to constitute an intention towards healing — I mean, of course, faith-healing. You took the mixture, after much difficulty and some excitement, and you were hypnotized into believing yourself better, and consequently were better."

"Then you believe in faith-healing?" said Richard Oast.

"I certainly don't believe much in any other kind," said Mr. Ingleside. "But let's have some more, Ramer," he added.

The artist read several.

"For the cramp —

'The little bone in the knee-joint of the hinder leg of a hare doth presently help the cramp, if you touch the grieved place therewith. Often proved.'

"For insomnia —

'The soles of the feet anointed with the fat of a dormouse doth procure sleep.'

"To get rid of mice —

'Put two or more quick mice in a long or deep earthen pot, and set the same nigh unto a fire made of ash-wood;

when the pot begins to be hot, the mice therein will chirp or make a noise, whereat all the mice that are nigh them will run towards them, and so will leap into the fire, as though they should come to help their poor imprisoned friends and neighbours. The cause whereof Mizaldus ascribes to the smoke of the ash-wood.'

"To baffle mice —

'To prevent rats and mice eating your cheese. Take hog's suet, and the brains of a weasel, mix them together, and lay small pieces about the room: this will prevent their coming.'

"Prophecy —

'If you take an oak apple from an oak tree, and in the same you shall find a little worm, which if it doth fly away, it signifies wars; if it creepe it betokens scarcity of corn; if it run about, then it foreshows the plague. This is the country man's astrology, which they have long observed for truth.'

"Against fleas —

'If you mark where your right foot doth stand at the first time that you do hear the cuckow, and then grave or take up the earth under the same; wheresoever the same is sprinkled about, there will no fleas breed. I know it hath proved true.'

"To curb the rover —

'If the ears of cats be cropped or cut off, it will make them keep at home better, for then the water (which they cannot abide) will drop into their ears, being open.'

"For the ague —

'Pare the nails of one that hath the quartan ague, which being put into a linen cloth, and so tied about the neck of a

quick eel, and the same eel put into the water, thereby the ague will be driven away.'

"For teething babes —

'Young children, whose gums are anointed with the brain of a hare, do breed their teeth easily. And it hath been proved with the brain of a coney.'

"For toothache —

'This following is a true and proved medicine for the tooth ach. Take a handful of ground ivy, as much of spearmint, and as much of salt; stamp them all a little together, then put all the same into a pint of vinegar, and seethe all well over the fire; then strain it well, and put the same into a close glassen vessel or bottle; and when you will use it, take a spoonful thereof and put it into the side of the mouth that acheth, and hold down your cheek, that it may descend to the roots of the aching teeth, and it will take the ach and pain away presently. This was taught me by a woman to whom many resorted for help, who used only this medicine therefor.'

"For cloudy vision —

'If the stone that is found in the head of a long snail be made in fine powder, and blown in the eye, it puts quite away all spots thereof, and it destroys the web in the eye, and any other evil in the same.'

"A weapon for killing snakes —

'If you would kill snakes and adders, strike them with a large radish.'

"I like this best," said Ramer. "For a very common ailment. 'Pain in the stomach. Put thirty white peppercorns in your mouth and drive

them down with beer.' 'Drive' is a splendid word there."

"And here is something of a different kind," Ramer concluded; "almost the sketch for a poem by Mr. Yeats —

'It is credibly reported, that whosoever is sick, and at the point of death, though they be marvellous old, lying or being in a certain place in Ireland, the same party cannot die until he or she be removed out of that place. And many that have been there, being very old and weary of their lives, have earnestly desired to be removed from thence, who as soon as they have been out of that place, have died presently. A very strange thing, if it be true.'"

"Never mind that old book," said Christie, who had come in as Ramer was reading. "Do you know, Ingleside," he asked, "who used to live in this house?"

"No," said Mr. Ingleside. "No, I don't."

"Well," said Christie, "I do."

"I suppose," said Leslie, "that some wretched outsider has sent in an article on Buckingham Street, and you had to read it."

"As it happens," Christie replied, "your beastly conjecture is right. But I don't see that it matters. The thing is, that I do know, never mind how. Anyway — sit tight, all of you — this very house we are now in was once the home of Samuel Pepys. The last house on the west overlooking the river: that's this, you know, beyond a doubt. Think of Pepys writing his old diary on this spot, night after night. That's what I call interesting. Pepys must have been one of the first tenants, because York

House stood all over this ground until 1675, with that gateway down there as its entrance from the river. The great Duke of Buckingham bought the old York House, where Bacon was born, and rebuilt it for receptions and filled it with pictures."

"Do you know," Christie added impressively, reading from a piece of paper, "that the Duke of Buckingham (for further particulars see *The Three Musketeers*) bought Rubens' own collection to hang here, just as a Pierpont Morgan would to-day? The whole thing in one swoop. Do you know there were nineteen Titians, seventeen Tintorettos, thirteen Paul Veroneses, three Raphaels, and three Leonardos hanging more or less where we are talking now? All we have in exchange is old Ramer."

"Never mind," said Ramer; "a living dog is better than a dead Leonardo."

"But think of it," said Christie. "Isn't that a splendid kind of ghost to dream about? I would like to be haunted by nineteen Titians. Well, York House was sold to a syndicate, and they pulled it down and built on its site this street, George Street, Villiers Street, and Duke Street. That was in 1675; Pepys moved in in 1784. It was called York Buildings then. Peter the Great lodged at the opposite corner; Rousseau also lodged in Buckingham Street, in 1765, with Hume; and here they had their famous row.

"I don't know when this house we are in was rebuilt," said Christie, "but among its later tenants were Etty the painter on the third floor, and Clarkson Stanfield on the ground floor. All these facts

are about to be published broadcast, so don't be surprised, Ingleside, if you find your rent raised." [1]

"I must get," said Mr. Ingleside, "a portrait of Pepys at once and have it hung in a good place, and, Christie, I count on you for a drawing by Clarkson Stanfield, whom I have always admired, but henceforth shall love too."

"But what price Etty?" Christie asked.

"No, I don't want an Etty," Mr. Ingleside said.

"You shall have your Clarkson Stanfield," said Christie. "I know where there are three."

"Genuine?" asked Dr. Staminer.

"Oh yes. They don't forge him," said Christie. "There's not enough demand. It's David Coxes and Boningtons and Turners that keep the factories busy."

[1] A tablet incorporating several of Christie's facts is now on the wall.

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH AN IRISH COMFORTER GETS QUICKLY TO WORK

A FEW days later, Providence — as is its way if you leave it alone and refrain from worrying it — seemed to have leanings towards a solution of Ann's difficulty; for Mr. Ingleside found on his table a letter from his cousin, Rachel Muirhead, offering to take Ann into her house to teach her gardening. "There is a great future for women gardeners," Miss Muirhead wrote, "and Ann will have every chance with me. It is a business in which women really have advantages above men, and a business also which must improve rather than decline, for the tendency to have at least a *pied-à-terre* in the country is on the increase, fostered by the motor; and even where no real interest in flowers exists, fashion will demand that it must be simulated. Much as I hate fashion and its decrees in what is called Society, I cannot see in the craze for beautiful gardens anything but good. The life also will make Ann healthy, and divert her mind from votes and such follies. A woman who can say that she has made two daffodils grow where only one grew before, is doing more for the country than a score of politicians. We have a nice little spare-room that is just suited to Ann; and if you leave

her to us, we will make a first-rate gardener and business woman of her."

Mr. Ingleside read the letter aloud. Then, "Do you want to go?" he asked.

"Oh no," said Ann, quickly. "Not at all. I want to be in London." (Miss Muirhead lived in Worcestershire.) "And gardening doesn't attract me a bit."

"The dogs weren't in London," said Mr. Ingleside.

"No," said Ann, "but that was a joke. Yet after all, puppies are far more interesting than bulbs."

Ann's words only partially reassured her father, but he said nothing about it. All that he said was, "I think you will have to go on a visit, anyway, but make it as short as you can; and for Heaven's sake don't let this gardening business get hold of your imagination."

"I won't, I promise," Ann said; "but, you dear thing, why don't you forbid it and settle the matter once for all?"

"No," said Mr. Ingleside, "I don't forbid. If I had brought you up properly, I might. Suggestion is as much as I have any right to. When will you go?" he added.

"I can go whenever you can spare me," said Ann.

"Then you'll never go," replied her father. "The best thing to do is to get it over quickly and come back and settle down again. Life is so horribly unsettled. There is always something going to happen to-morrow or next week."

"Of course," said Ann; "that's what makes it so attractive."

"Yes," said Mr. Ingleside, "at seventeen; but not at fifty. At fifty it is to-day that we prize — and yesterday. I believe I should like to be one of those toads that are discovered in the very heart of rocks — still alive after thousands of years. Until the stupid pickaxe discloses them, they must be the least unsettled — the most secure — of sentient things."

Mr. Ingleside's cousin was known to the world as Miss Muirhead, the owner of the Fairmile Gardens, and the author of half a dozen books on gardening which had revolutionized England. Always an imaginative gardener, Miss Muirhead had amused herself some few years before in setting some of her theories on paper — in particular that one which as far as possible denied the gardener an axe, her view being that the retention of trees and other indigenous features should wherever practicable be sacredly observed. She was, in fact, the best known foe of formal gardening, and her book had an immense influence in England, not because she was the first to advocate this teaching, but because she came at the right moment. She may be said to have sounded the knell of bedding plants.

What she began as a pastime Miss Muirhead continued as a business. So many readers of her books rang the bell of her lodge and asked to be allowed to peep at her garden that she made a new one purely for trade purposes, and not only sold plants but became a professional adviser upon the laying out of grounds.

With Miss Muirhead lived Miss Lingard; and they had thus lived together for thirty years. Both were the same age, sixty-one. Miss Muirhead was the more practical, Miss Lingard the more poetical. Miss Muirhead called Miss Lingard "A" — her name was Adelaide; Miss Lingard called Miss Muirhead "Beloved." "A" looked after the house; "Beloved" criticized the food and signed the cheques. "Beloved" held the reins when they drove out together; "A" received the happiest smiles of the villagers. "Beloved" said "I"; "A" said "we."

Ann was soon at home with both of them, and very quickly mastered their simple routine. Miss Muirhead being busy just then upon a new garden, Ann was a great deal with Miss Lingard, and accompanied her on her rounds as a Lady Bountiful. These rounds took twice as long as when Miss Muirhead drove, for Miss Lingard could not bear to hurry the ponies. Also she found it harder to stem the flow of the talking mothers in the cottages. Nothing requires so firm a hand.

Outside Mrs. Winter's they found Dr. O'Sullivan, and Ann was introduced to him before he went in. He was a round, cheery Irishman, the idol of the countryside.

Even outside in the chaise Ann heard his greeting. "Good morning, mother, how are ye? Pain? Oh, there's plenty of that to spare in the world. Ye're not remarkable for that! But I wish ye rid of it! I'll send ye down a bottle."

They went on to the cottage hospital, where Miss

Lingard and Ann accompanied the doctor from bed to bed. "Well, grannie," he said to one very old woman, "so Mrs. Peters" — who had just died — "has got ahead of ye! Well, well, who'd have expected that? Ye'll be outliving the lot of us if ye're not careful."

To another old woman whose hobby it was to be within five minutes of her end, he said, "If I'd as nice a nurse to do the nursing of me, I'd stop me dying for the pleasure of looking at her."

But his crowning effort was with old Mrs. Guntle, the arch-grumbler of the place. "Ye're worse, are ye? Well, I'm wondering how Thorley's Food for Cattle would be suiting you. You know what that is? Oilcakes. When I was in America there was a woman at the point of death. Some one brought her a cake, and she ate it the night. The morning when I went to see her she was better. 'How are ye?' said I. 'Och, docthor,' said she, 'I'm a new man.' It saved her. Would ye like to try?"

Mrs. Guntle in spite of herself began to laugh.

"There," said the doctor, "ye've cheered me up powerful. Ye wouldn't believe it, but I was that miserable this morning — a fit of the blues. But ye've cheered me beautiful."

"No, no, *I* haven't cheered *you*, doctor," said Mrs. Guntle.

"Well, it's all the same," said the doctor. "Only don't forget me in your prayers."

"An' how are you this morning, Miss Piper?" he said at the next bed. "Dying, are ye? Well, I don't believe it, but what if ye are? Heaven's a

beautiful place, they tell me, and divil a floor to scrub in the whole building!

"And now come along out of this," the doctor said to Ann, when he had looked at the last patient and paid the last outrageous compliment to the very homely nurse; "this is no place for a fresh young thing like you. Come and see my roses. The best in England."

And he led the way across the road to his house and cut for each of the ladies a bunch of the "ould cabbage" as he called them — "still the sweetest flower on God's earth, in spite of all the florists in England and France."

He ran after them with a spray of mignonette. "Give it to Miss Muirhead with my compliments," he said: "the very rare *reseda obsoleta O'Sullivanii*. She's too scientific for me," he added to Ann, "so I always have a little joke with her. And too modern too. Won't look at mignonette in a garden because it falls into no colour scheme. Colour scheme be ——!"

Ann laughed, but Miss Lingard looked troubled. She could not bear even the suggestion that Miss Muirhead could be wrong.

"Miss Ingleside," the doctor added impressively, "don't be a scientific gardener. Be an ould-fashioned gardener. Scatther your seeds and bulbs, and forget all about their colour. Stick to the ould friends — the sweet-williams and the mignonette. And the lemon verbena. A garden's no garden unless there's a leaf of lemon verbena to pinch in it. Yes, be jabers, and marigolds! I can't forgive the

despots who banished the marigold. No, Miss Ingleside, you'd better be a lady docthor than one of these new-fangled lady gardeners — in my opinion. And afther all, why not? You're young enough to begin the course."

But Ann gave him no encouragement. "I'm thinking about it all," she explained. "I'm so bewildered: it's all come at once, so suddenly."

"Well," said the doctor, "bury your pretty nose in that cabbage rose, and things'll be simpler. I wish ye good morning, ladies, and I hope we'll meet again, Miss Ingleside."

On their return they had to answer Miss Muirhead's minute questions.

"How's Mrs. Ribby's leg?"

"It's better, I think: but she says it's worse."

"Of course," said Miss Muirhead. "She wanted your sympathy. There's no fun when it's better. 'A' is so weak," she added to Ann. "They can all take her in."

"Has Tommy Wilson begun to go to school again?" Miss Muirhead asked.

"Yes. To-day."

"Is Barnes keeping sober?"

"Mrs. Barnes didn't say anything about it."

"Then he isn't. Was her eye bruised?"

"No, poor thing."

"Don't pity her too much. There's many a woman envies her even those attentions from her husband. In fact," said Miss Muirhead, "don't pity any of them too much. There's a tendency abroad to cover the poor with pity just because

they're poor, as if money had anything to do with happiness. They're quite as happy as the rich, and in this village they're particularly lucky too. Money has less to do with happiness than health has and simplicity. I wish some of the gloomy authors would learn that."

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH WE MEET TWO OF MISS MUIRHEAD'S CLIENTS

ANN accompanied her aunt to the houses of one or two clients and was present during the visits of others, and she was struck by Miss Muirhead's masterful way with them. On her first day they drove over to Sir Felix Leven's.

"I have only an hour," Miss Muirhead said, as the great man met her. "Let us get to the gardens at once."

"But, my dear lady, we can't do it in an hour," said Sir Felix.

"I can come to my conclusions in an hour," said Miss Muirhead. "One sees these things quickly."

"I must say I expected you to give me more attention than that," Sir Felix replied, "considering ——"

"Considering the size of the fee?" said Miss Muirhead. "But you see, Sir Felix, I don't charge for time here: I charge for an experienced eye. I can see in a moment what can or cannot be done. It is when I get home and plan it out that the time you are purchasing will come in."

Sir Felix agreed reluctantly and led the way to the garden, while Ann followed with his son, an olive-

hued, black-haired Etonian of little less than her own age.

"How you must love this place! It's so very beautiful," Ann remarked by way of an opening.

"Yes, rather decent, isn't it?" he said; "but we're here very little. Two or three months at the most, and that means I'm only here for a few weeks. You see, since the governor was taken up by the nobs he has to do what they do; and this is only his summer place. He comes here for Easter and for week-ends. At the end of July he takes a house at Goodwood, and the next week he's on his yacht; then we go to our place in Scotland, you know. I like that, because there's good fishing. And afterwards the governor puffs off to Marienbad to get his little tummy patched up and drink that putrid stuff with all the swells. But he likes it, bless his heart! Gets up at six o'clock to do it, with a brass band accompaniment, and as pleased as Punch if one of those weekly papers has his mug in it. Poor old governor, he doesn't see that the people are all laughing at his nose! And when he comes back there are the big shoots here, and I tell you our pheasants are corkers, like Christmas turkeys — they take a lot of missing; and then directly Christmas is over it's time for Monte, and all the old grind begins again. It doesn't interest me. I like riding and racquets, and I hate all this moving about; but the governor's let himself in for it now, and I don't think he'll ever stop. You see he's so horribly oofy."

Ann had a feeling that she was at a keyhole;

but she found no words with which to urge the boy to stop.

"The governor and I," he continued, "hit it off all right, but I'm afraid I'm a great disappointment to him, and I know he's a great disappointment to me. I used to look up to him once, before I knew; but now it makes me sick to see him being toadied to for his money by one set of nobs and chasing about after another. But it's my brother he can't get on with. My brother — he's older than I am — has thrown himself in with the Zionists, you know, and he's offended the governor no end because he's gone back to the real name of the family, which is Levi, and he puts it out in full in *Who's Who?* — Henry Bull Levi, eldest son of Sir Felix Leven. Rather a nasty one, isn't it?"

"And what are *you* going to do?" Ann asked him.

"When I leave Eton?" he said. "Oh, I am going to do all the right things. I'm going to Sandhurst. But I'd much rather go to Texas and have a ranch."

If Miss Muirhead was too quick for Sir Felix Leven, Mr. Clarence Thayer of New York was too quick for her. A letter by the first post stated that he would be with her at 12.30, and by 12.45 the interview was over, and he was on his way, in his car, to London, to catch a night train to the Continent, and thence to America again.

"Now see here, Miss Muirhead," he said, "I've bought a house in Surrey — Marltye Grange. It's a Toodor house, and I want a Toodor garden. I don't mind what it costs, but it's got to be ready for

me when I come back next summer. You've got a year, say. Will you do it?"

"What is the size?" Miss Muirhead asked.

"Just what you like: what it ought to be," said Mr. Thayer. "You can take in as much of the surroundings as you want. It's all mine. I want a Toodor garden of the same size as would go with a Toodor house in Toodor times; and I want to leave it to you. But I don't want to see a grass-blade in it before it's good and ready. Here are six blank cheques already signed: fill them up as you want them. Don't write to me. Just go ahead. If there's any difficulty, settle it as if it were your own house. Is that fixed?"

"I must see it first," said Miss Muirhead.

The American uttered an exclamation of impatience and disappointment. "There!" he said. "You Britishers are all alike. I make you a sporting offer, and I expect a sporting return; and you say, 'I must see it first.' See it first! Why? There it is, just where it was ever since it was built, with yew hedges ten feet high and a yard thick and solid as the great wall of China, and a fish pond, and all the darned old things that this country can do and every other country would give its ears for. You know it backwards already although you've never been there. The Toodor model exact. And yet you say, 'I must see it first.' Well, that's not my way of doing business. I came here, dead out of my way, because I heard you were a woman in a thousand; but it seems I've lost the trip. Good-bye, Miss Muirhead. I'm disappointed."

Miss Muirhead laughed. "I'll do it," she said.

"Bully!" said Mr. Thayer. "Then that's settled." And he sprang into his car and was off in a cloud of dust.

"Oh," said Ann, "how fearfully exciting!"

"Could you believe," said Miss Muirhead, "that there existed a man who had enough sense of what was beautiful as to want a Tudor garden, and so lacking in everything that makes life interesting that he declines to see it in the making?"

"I suppose he hasn't got time," said Ann.

"No, "said Miss Muirhead, "how could he have? He's an American financier."

The next day Ann returned to London. "You are very kind," she said to Miss Muirhead, "but my heart wouldn't be in gardening at all. I should be bored to distraction most of the time. London for me."

"A headstrong modern girl," said Miss Muirhead, with a sigh.

"But a very nice one," said Miss Lingard.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH WE VISIT THE HIGH-PRIESTESS OF A TEMPLE OF ANTIQUITY

RICHARD OAST was very strong in wishing Ann to work. "Of course," he said, a few Fridays later, "all girls should have something to do; and the busier our wives are the better. Few women and fewer men have enough character to be idle. The notion that Adam because he was turned out to work was therefore cursed is the silliest fallacy I know. He was well rid of the place. The curse of Eden was not work but clothes. I should be a happy man if it weren't for coats that didn't fit. In any future incarnation I hope I may be a spaniel, and be always happy and dressed without dressing."

"But what about Ann?" said Mr. Ingleside.

"Yes," said Richard Oast. "What about Ann? It's one thing to applaud her for wanting to work, and it's another to find the work. Because she hasn't the propulsion of necessity. She can look about and choose; and people in that position, not being quite sincere, rarely do anything important."

"Ann's sincere enough," said her father.

"I should like her to use her hands," said Richard Oast. "What about book-binding?"

"I don't think she's got any hands," said Mr. Ingleside. "It must be practical head work."

"Don't make her a Society journalist," said Christie. "You should see our fashion lady! It's true she would get her hats and frocks for nothing, and face cream to burn, but it's a knell of a life."

"I have an idea," said Dr. Staminer. "Apprentice her for a year to Miss Ming. Miss Ming is a great friend of mine — in fact, I visit her shop every day, and a good half of my things come from her. She knows her work, and it is work of a very interesting kind. Only nice people go there, and Ann, even if she did not continue in the business, would come away at the end of the year with a very remarkable store of information on very interesting subjects."

"Who is Miss Ming?" Richard Oast inquired.

"Miss Ming has an old curiosity shop," Dr. Staminer explained; and it was arranged that he and Mr. Ingleside should meet there on the morrow.

Miss Ming's shop was not far from South Kensington Museum, and indeed it was rather like a collection of samples from that wonderful institution. The Museum carried out Miss Ming's stock-in-trade to the highest power. Everything that she had in small numbers the Museum possessed in profusion and perfection. Who, however, can compare a museum with a shop — the one so frigid and so full of the unattainable, the other so human and possessable? Visitors are requested not to touch, says the Museum. Examine everything, said Miss Ming.

Miss Ming's habitués—and she had many—were different enough in most respects, but they had one feeling in common, and that was surprise that Miss Ming ever brought herself to part with anything. For she entertained towards her stock-in-trade a feeling of benign appreciation. Everything that passed through her hands was good: her catholicity of taste was without bounds.

Where Miss Ming acquired her little bits (everything was a "bit") no one knew, for she never left her shop, and not one of her customers ever found her dealing with a seller; and yet there was something new every day. After the Boxer rising, Miss Ming's shop was a treasury of loot. Blue enamel caught the eye; sumptuous robes; hair-pins made of feathers from the breasts of kingfishers; rings and bracelets of jade, green and milky; gold and silver filigree; opium pipes; miraculous embroidery. Where did they come from? No one could say; but there they were.

The Chinese interlude was, however, exceptional. The life-blood of Miss Ming's business was the English past. She looked back: hence her popularity with travelling Americans, to whom the backward glance can be indulged in only on holidays. They went to her for such essentials as spinning-wheels and rush-light holders. Miss Ming always had the right things. When lustre was the rage, she had lustre. When samplers were almost more than Old Masters, she had samplers. When it was fashionable to carry a handkerchief to the theatre in a bead bag a hundred years old, she had bead bags.

But artifice by no means monopolized her enthusiasms. She loved Nature too. She had a cabinet full of shells, and to watch her caressing a chambered nautilus was an education in lyrical appreciation. An old maid, yes; but if you asked to see some Stuart baby caps, her maternal ecstasy as she arranged the little faded lace bonnets over her doubled hand would have thrilled Luini. Miss Ming, in short, was that rare and delightful thing, an enthusiast.

It was difficult to find anything that she did not like: she may be said to have fondled the whole world. "Isn't it a darling?" was her commonest phrase. "Isn't it a darling?" she would say of a netsuke or a crucifix, an ivory and gold whist-marker or a silver pounce-box, a strip of Honiton or a Toby jug, an iridescent vase excavated in Crete or an elaborate watch-clock. And she would be right. They were darlings — each in its way: and her darlings beyond question, because she had made them so. She sold them because it was her business, but she often took them home first. She sold cheaply where she bought cheaply: never was dealer's frame so free from huckster's blood.

It was Miss Ming's habit to sit in a little parlour at the back of her shop and wait till the customers had had time to glance about before she came forward. From this sanctuary she greeted Dr. Staminer and Mr. Ingleside very cordially, and after the doctor had sent his acquisitive eye on a swift roving quest round the shelves, and Mr. Ingleside had examined two or three netsukes very attentively

("Aren't they little ducks?" Miss Ming inquired), they all sat down, and Dr. Staminer introduced the great topic.

But Miss Ming gave them no encouragement. "It's a nice enough business," she said, "for an old maid like me, but young girls shouldn't live so much in the past. I don't like the idea of a fresh nice girl selling ancient curiosities and fossils all day long. I shouldn't let any girl of my own — if I had one — take it up, and I shouldn't care to instruct Miss Ingleside even if her father begged me to. Old curiosities are very well in their way, but one ought not to begin with them. It's like bus-conducting. No one begins as a bus-conductor: he gets there."

"But you?" said the doctor.

"Oh, I," said Miss Ming, "I was more or less brought up to it. . . . I'm the exception. . . . But you don't suppose I would not rather have children than old china, and house worries than jade? But I haven't, and there's an end to it. Here I am instead, and I'd much rather be selling you a darling little piece of enamel, like this, than talking about myself."

"Wouldn't you take Mr. Ingleside's daughter if she paid a premium?" Dr. Staminer asked. "For mornings only, mind. No afternoon work."

"Not if she paid me a thousand pounds a minute," said Miss Ming. "I mean it. Not a fresh young girl like that! The idea! If you brought her to me in ten years' time, and she hadn't found a husband, I might; but I'm not sure even then. I couldn't bear a companion, and that's a fact. I couldn't

bear anyone to see me bargaining with the people I buy things from."

"You're too sensitive," said Dr. Staminer. "It's absurd. I don't know how you've done things as well as you have with an idiotic suet-pudding heart like that! You don't deserve to get on."

"I dare say I am foolish," said Miss Ming, "but we must be ourselves. There was a soldier this morning brought in—what do you think?—his Victoria Cross. And do you think I could buy it? I couldn't. He was ready to take a pound for it, he said."

"You didn't do him any good by that," said Dr. Staminer. "He merely went to some one else and sold it for ten shillings."

"I couldn't help it," said Miss Ming. "I simply couldn't do it. A Victoria Cross—think of it! I couldn't afford to be generous to him by giving him a pound out of hand, and I couldn't bring myself to trade in such a reward. That will show Mr. Ingleside," she said, "how unsuited I am to teach his daughter or anyone the true principles of business."

Dr. Staminer took the refusal philosophically. "I don't think you're right," he said; "but if you think like that, it comes to the same thing. I am disappointed, because a year with you would have qualified Ann to catalogue my collection, which she is totally unable to do at present, and which some one will have to do."

And so they went off, but not before Mr. Ingleside had bought a soap-stone figure of one of the Japanese gods of good luck, whose very large bald head (Miss Ming told him) it is the duty of its owner to rub

gently on every possible occasion, that benefits may follow.

"Ann should make a good start in life with that, whatever she does," said Mr. Ingleside as Miss Ming wrapped it up.

"The old darling!" said she, as she handed him the parcel.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH VARIOUS PROFESSIONS THAT INVOLVE NO LOSS OF CASTE ARE DESCRIBED

IT was shortly after the visit to Miss Ming's that Ann asked her father if she might begin at once to learn shorthand and typewriting.

"Of course," said he. "It is an excellent stepping stone to usefulness. I might learn to dictate to you myself. I don't mind what you do," he exclaimed, "so long as I see something of you and you don't have to wear a blouse. Of course, as a humanitarian, what I should really like for you is a Post Office appointment, and then I should feel sure that in one office at any rate a few men who have the effrontery to want stamps are not dying of exposure. But where," he added, "are you going to learn?"

Ann said she had thought of Miss Beautiman, and Mr. Ingleside agreed at once, for Miss Beautiman was a daughter of his father's family doctor, who had performed what is in England the exceedingly easy task of bringing up his children like lilies of the field and then dying insolvent. The result was that the three Misses Beautiman at this moment were earning their own living, or what approximated to it, in London, with a courage and perseverance which, if they were more generally distributed, would leave

those detached apostles of efficiency, the English critics of England, without any occupation save the very distasteful one of improving themselves.

Kate Beautiman was clearly a tired woman, but her will was strong, and was fortified by the bitterness of her recollections of the days before fortune, as she now knew it, had smiled upon her. She worked hard from half-past nine till seven, and expected hard work from her assistants, who bent, to the number of five, over their machines all day. Miss Beautiman herself had practically given up typing, and sat in a little wooden compartment by the door to receive custom and control the accounts. She had set out with the determination that her terms were to be cash, but her face wore too many proofs that that policy had been defeated. She looked like a woman who had met all sorts and conditions of men in business transactions: her prevailing cynicism suggested it; her attitude even to new clients suggested it. It is extraordinary how different a business man can be in his office in London and in his home at Wimbledon.

The sisters occupied an upper part in Bloomsbury, where by dint of a tea-and-tin diet they had managed for some years to exist, but where now, thanks chiefly to the exertions of the typist Kate, the second sister, they were dwelling in comparative luxury. For Miss Kate Beautiman, after eight years of struggling, had accumulated a sufficient number of clients to bring in a clear profit of £150 a year, with anæmia thrown in. Of the others, Miss Ellen, the younger, copied pictures in the National Gallery every Thursday and

Friday, and Miss Sarah, the elder, did research work in the Reading-Room of the British Museum. They both shared their sister Kate's unswerving determination, but they were cheerier souls than she. Typing for gentlemen is, it seems, a more dulling occupation even than that of copying sermons for the needy or penurious clergy. Miss Sarah, at any rate, retained a certain respect for humanity at large, whereas Miss Kate, while associating little enough with her own sex, had come to look with positive disgust upon the other. Miss Sarah still cherished in some neat corner of her gentle heart the possibility that she might yet find an admirer: she was only forty-seven; but Miss Kate's every gesture, every expression, her clothes, her umbrella, her footstep, said as plain as plain could be, "Hands off."

"Yes, my dear," Miss Sarah replied to Ann's remark that she must get tired of copying at the British Museum, "I do get tired. Very tired. But it doesn't do to think about it. The only way is to keep going on. But the air's terrible, and the people I sit between! You wouldn't believe. Of course they're always changing, but just now on one side of me there's a Scotch poet who asks my opinion of all his verses, and on the other a negro from San Domingo who sits surrounded by the complete works of John Stuart Mill. What negroes want with Mill I can't imagine, but I've noticed that the blacker a reader is the stiffer are the books he reads. You should see them contorting over Herbert Spencer! Last week I sat between a Pole and a monk, and a little while ago there was a simple-lifer with

nothing on but a blanket, and hair down his back."

"And what do they all do?" asked Ann.

"They're all busy writing books," said Miss Sarah. "Every one in the Museum is writing a book, even the officials. You'd have thought that they'd seen books enough: but no. If they'd all stop making new ones, and turn their minds to indexing the old ones, there'd be something in it. But that would be too useful. Take my present employer, for example. Just now, what do you think I'm doing? I'm collecting materials for a book about every one of importance called Graham. My employer is a rich old gentleman in Wigan whose name is Graham, and he wants to celebrate the tribe. It isn't as if it was Graham only: I have to hunt also for Grahames and Graemes and Grams and Grayhams, and pack off the results every evening by post. I get quite a start if I see Graham over a shop now, it's so on my mind. I believe if I was introduced to anyone named Graham I should have hysterics."

Miss Ellen, the youngest—she was forty-one—had of course the best time. To begin with, she had the happy artistic temperament, and being the child of the family was licensed to possess a bad memory and a vaguer sense of economy than her more responsible sisters, whose privilege and misfortune it was to come into the world before her.

"I like my work," she said, "but sometimes we have very bad seasons. Just now I'm busy. I'm doing Reynolds' 'Angels' Heads' for an American lady who thinks it one of the cutest things she ever

saw. What I don't like is having to keep on copying the same picture. I suppose I must have copied Andrea del Sarto's 'Holy Family' ten times. Once I had to do it full size for an altarpiece for a church in Torquay; but when it was done I couldn't get the money, and so it was sold to a lady from Great Malvern to raffle at a bazaar.

"People who want pictures are very trying," Miss Ellen continued. "They change their minds oftener than any other kind. I'm afraid I really have to insist now upon half the money on account. The Americans, for example, they mean all right, I've no doubt, but they go back to America and forget all about their commissions, or else they buy a coloured reproduction in a shop, and think I can easily find another purchaser for my hand-made copy. They're awfully particular about real hand-made work, some of them. 'You're certain it's hand-done,' they say. Why, that's all I can do. If I could sit at a machine like Kate and manifold copies of Holy Families, don't you suppose I should?"

Ann became Miss Kate's pupil for a small consideration, and breathed over a machine every morning, painfully forcing her fingers to obey the alphabet, while at odd times she packed her head with grammalogues. She was the only unpaid worker. The other assistants were there in deadly earnest, because they or their parents needed the money. What girl would translate human handwriting into type for nine hours a day if she could help it? (My handwriting, for example, or yours?) Miss Beautiman's girls were all pale and round-shouldered and

joyless. They could get excited, and often did,—over a fashion plate, for the most part, or a recital of domestic disturbances, or the melodrama at the local theatre,—but they had no joy, no sparkle. Nor did any of them seem to be engaged: no young man waited for them in the evenings. To Ann, who had thought vaguely of all shop-girls—and therefore office-girls—having their young men, this was a surprise. She learned it from Miss Moth, the only one who was readily friendly and sympathetic—Ann herself having probably made free intercourse with the others rather difficult by hesitating lest she should seem patronizing. She had nothing but friendliness for them, and no consciousness of any but the accidental superiority of easier circumstances; but she made the mistake of thinking herself into these others. Hence it was that Miss Moth was the only one with whom she talked at all naturally, and on two or three occasions when she stood Miss Moth a lunch with some fresh meat in it—as a change from her scones and half-pork pies and boiled eggs—she had learned not only the history of her guest but the others too.

"They're all as poor as they can be," Miss Moth said, "only they have a little more independence than ordinary girls, and therefore prefer this to being in a shop. And some of them are plainer, too, than the shop-people like."

"And they're none of them engaged?"

"No," said Miss Moth, "we're none of us engaged."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Ann, noticing the change of pronoun.

"It's all right," said Miss Moth, rather wanly. "Why should every girl be engaged? All the same, I'm sorry for some of them. There's so little to look forward to — nothing, in fact, except a rather better situation as typist in an ordinary office, or even some day the founding of such a business as Miss Beautiman's. Several girls have left us to go into offices, but they all say they wish they hadn't. So many London employers and clerks don't seem to be quite ready yet to work side by side decently with girls. I suppose a time will come, if we all peg along and insist on earning our own living more and more in men's ways."

"Are they very horrid?" Ann asked.

"They can be," said Miss Moth.

"Do you think it will change?" Ann asked.

"Oh no, I don't. I don't really believe in any kind of change except for the worse," said Miss Moth; "but one always hopes underneath, don't you see. I suppose that's human nature — like getting hungry and tired."

Ann looked at her almost tearfully.

"It's all right," said Miss Moth, "but I wish that there wasn't so much talked and written and acted above love; because it only fills girls' heads with what oughtn't to be there, as things go. All of our lot would be far happier if their heads weren't full of it. Most of life for every one has got to be lived without love, but you wouldn't think it from books. Love's only frilling, anyway; but it gives you something besides yourself to think about, and that's good. Work is the real thing, of course; but the sillier kind

of girl can't see it, and so they just go on always thinking of a possible to-morrow, and starving and moping to-day. Directly they get away they begin on their novelettes. We had a visit a little while ago from a suffragette who was going round the type-writing offices to get recruits. Miss Beautiman is a suffragette, of course, but that is what you would expect: she is a business woman, and she wants a hand in things; but the others only laughed. I could have told the truth about them if I had been asked. 'They don't want votes,' I should have said, 'they want lovers. What's the good of talking to a lot of half-starved foolish typists about votes? You can't make a girl any more sensible by giving her a vote; but you can make her happier by giving her a lover, and you can turn her into a housekeeper and a mother by giving her a husband.'"

"Then you don't want a vote?" Ann said.

"Oh, I don't mind," Miss Moth replied wearily. "I'm tired, anyway."

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH A YOUNG GENTLEMAN'S GENTLEMANLY FUTURE IS CONSIDERED

"WHAT are you going to do with John?" Mr. Ingleside one day asked. "Ann's begun to learn typewriting."

"I wish I knew," said Mrs. Campion. "It's so difficult. He seems to have no particular leaning towards anything, except cricket; and I understand that liberal as is the payment of amateurs one can't live on it."

"He's not old enough to be secretary of a golf club," Mr. Ingleside remarked. "Any gentleman may do that, you know, but it is usual to fail elsewhere a good deal first. Quite aged second sons are capital at it."

"Do be serious," said Mrs. Campion. "The poor boy's whole future depends upon it."

"Frivolity is the high road to seriousness," said Mr. Ingleside. "It always ends there."

"I blame myself," said Mrs. Campion. "He ought to have been trained in some definite direction from the first. It is too late now for so many things — the Army, the Navy, the Church. I don't think he'd be any use at the Bar, dear boy, and I'm sure he wouldn't go in for medicine. What is there left?"

"Well, there's trade," said Mr. Ingleside. "Anyone is allowed to be a wine merchant."

"I shouldn't like that," said Mrs. Campion.

"The Stock Exchange," Mr. Ingleside continued. "Extremely good form. High spirits equal to an undergraduate's. Why not buy him a partnership? He might have a distinct *flair* for speculation. Lots of gilded youth have."

Mrs. Campion looked pained. "I couldn't afford that," she said, "anyway."

"There's always journalism," Mr. Ingleside added. "That would put him into a position of command. England is passing utterly into the power of the Press."

"Yes," said Mrs. Campion, "but journalism wants brains."

"True," Mr. Ingleside replied, "but not necessarily the journalist's. I don't suggest that he should do anything low. He might confine himself to dramatic criticism and noting the names of guests in the swagger restaurants. I am told that this carries free meals with it."

"You are incorrigible," said Mrs. Campion, "and you're not helping me a bit."

"Oh yes, I am," said Mr. Ingleside. "We've cleared away a lot of ground. There's still the stage."

"Never," cried Mrs. Campion.

"Hush," said her friend; "don't say 'never' so loud. It's often not till parents shout 'never' at the top of their voices that sons begin to think seriously of doing the forbidden thing. Why not the stage?

It will teach him to walk well, at any rate, and to keep his hands still, and to wear beautiful trousers."

"Please don't," said Mrs. Campion. "You hurt me. How could I have a son who was an actor?"

"Why abuse actors?" said Mr. Ingleside. "Actors are very enviable people."

"How, enviable?" inquired Mrs. Campion. "You don't call it enviable, do you, to smear grease paint on your face every evening?"

"Not alone," said Mr. Ingleside.

"Well, do you call it enviable to be always pretending you are some one else?"

"Certainly I do," said Mr. Ingleside. "That's just what I do call enviable. Acting might be described as a protest against fact; and indeed actors seem to be among the happiest persons; and they are notoriously the healthiest. No actor or actress is ever ill; which shows what a fraud fresh air must be. I know that I for one would often like to be some one else — or rather, to put it more accurately, I would often like to cease to be myself. Actors are continually pretending that they are others. I knew a young stationer once with a heavy moustache, who on his annual fortnight at the seaside carried a bag with 'Captain Marden' on it and the name of a regiment under the name. The military status he assumed, and the consequent attention that he received in his boarding-house, gave him more pleasure and refreshment than all the ozone of the sea. For two weeks he was another man and a happy man. Such a device would be no good to me, because my mind is so absurdly constituted that to deceive

others is useless to it unless I can deceive myself too; but he was more sensibly made, and he revelled in it. Actors are in his happy position every night of their lives."

"The man was a bounder," said John, who had come in while they were talking.

"Oh, I dare say he was," said Mr. Ingleside. "But what of that? This world belongs to bounders; it is the very place for them. They are in a great majority. It is we fastidians (as I might call us) who are the intruders; and it is we who are always applying the caustic epithets. We do so largely because we are disappointed and jealous. We know in our hearts that we are too exacting to enjoy the existing conditions, and that makes us bitter; whereas the bounder is attuned to them, and therefore contented. Don't abuse bounders, my boy. Don't abuse anybody.

"But of course," Mr. Ingleside continued, "John can't go on the stage, because John isn't an actor. Actors are always actors. A man does not go on the stage—does not accept this life of pretence and grease paint and heat and applause—unless he has a disposition that way. The unreality of it all nauseates John; he will therefore never be an actor. Nor could John ever contemplate the spectacle of his wife exchanging public caresses with other men; he will therefore never marry an actress. But actors and actresses think nothing of all this. Every calling is staffed by the people who are fitted for it; those who join it by mistake leave. Actors are actors; tailors are tailors; hairdressers are hairdressers; reporters

are reporters; election agents are election agents. It is that fact which makes so much criticism futile and absurd. Idle, for example, to find fault with a restaurateur for not having the sense to taste his own food and see for himself that his mushrooms, for instance, are without any flavour save that of the kitchen; because a restaurateur is a restaurateur: that is to say, a man without any interest in flavours. To him mushrooms are not one of the rarest of natural delicacies, but simply so much little white fungus that arrives at Covent Garden in the autumn at a shilling or so a bushel, and may be retailed very profitably, after being ruined by his *chef*, at threepence apiece. Do you see? All this (though you might not think it) leads up to what I want to say. People are what they are. Hence the principal reason for becoming an actor — the ease with which one escapes from oneself — falls to the ground, because an actor, being an actor, does not value this privilege, since to a very great extent he is nothing unless he is some one else. He has so little personality to escape from."

Mr. Ingleside paused, and John gave a long whistle.

"What a lecturer you'd make," he said. "I've never heard you say so much."

"That's your mother's fault," said Mr. Ingleside. "She makes me talk."

"Of course I do," Mrs. Campion replied. "That's what women are for."

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH MANY ASPECTS OF THE NEW TERROR ARE DISCUSSED

IT was a Friday evening, and Vycount Ramer had brought in with him a late edition with the news of another suffragette raid in it. He read the account — the usual thing: on the one side, the granite male tradition of ages; on the other, a handful of exasperated, excited girls, with a very real cause to further and no satisfying means of furthering it but shrill tumult and lawlessness. Christie listened with impatience and angry grunts.

"Well," he said at the close. "I give it up."

"What do you give up?" Mr. Ingleside asked.

"The anti-suffrage business. I've been on the fence a long time, and now I'm coming down."

"On which side?"

"On the suffragettes' side, of course. In future I'm a suffragette too."

"But their horrible tactics," said Henry Thrace. "Their brickbats. Their ——"

"Yes, I know," said Christie; "but I don't care. They're right. They ought to have a vote. Any drunken beast can have it, with nothing to qualify him but his damned trousers, while the cleverest woman in the country mayn't express an opinion.

It isn't fair, and I'm not going to stand it. Henceforward I'm a suffragette."

"Votes for Wimmin," piped Leslie.

"I don't mind," said Christie. "They've got to have votes."

"Serve them right if they had," said Leslie. "There's no fun in voting."

"Fun!" snapped Christie. "Who wants fun? They're in earnest."

"You will, of course, express your new views in your paper?" said Leslie.

"Leave my paper alone," said Christie. "We've had all that out before. The paper's opinions and mine will never be the same. They pay me for certain work, and I do it, and that's all. They haven't bought my soul."

"How jolly it would be," said Leslie, who was never happier than in ragging Christie, "to find a Tory paper of which the staff were Tory too. Odd about you, Christie: you're not a liar in any other direction."

Henry Thrace dashed in to avoid a real loss of temper. "I'm glad you feel so deeply about it," he said to Christie; "I wish I could, but women are so hopeless. Most women are either exchanging scandal, or making it, or hoping to be mistaken for Dimpsie Dentifrice."

"Well, and what are most men doing?" retorted Christie. "No, if it comes to that, there's not a penny to choose. But that's not the point. The point is that those women who want to vote should be allowed to. Those that don't want to needn't.

I don't pretend to be any great shakes as a politician or sociologist, but I can see plainly enough that a new kind of woman has arisen, and that the state of things must be adapted to meet her case. I can believe that fifty years ago, in spite of the fact that one of the disfranchised sex was on the throne, the cry, 'Votes for Women,' would have rung out with some insincerity. But women are very different now. There are at once more unmarried women and there are more women who marry without illusions. But what is more to the point, women have been enabled to earn their living in such a great variety of new ways that those who are independent of men have increased in number enormously and will go on increasing."

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, "I think it is time that Englishmen had a lesson. Whether the suffragettes win or lose — and I suppose they will win some day — things can't be as they were. A few more men will have been taught to meet women frankly with the true homage of level terms, in place of the false homage of the silky drawing-room voice."

Ann coming in at this moment, Richard Oast turned to her. "I suppose you're going to be a suffragette?" he said pleasantly.

"I dare say," said Ann, "but I haven't thought much about it yet. I should probably think as father did."

"A very poor preparation," said Oast. "The art of being a suffragette is to ignore your father's opinions. But, my dear, I don't think you're very promising material. You belong too naturally to

life. Your tendency is to find it good. The suffragette is bred of discontent—as indeed all reform is."

"The first one may have been," said Christie, "but they're not all discontented women any longer. There are plenty of suffragettes who are made so by reason and a sense of justice. Why, how could a decent, intelligent woman sit down under the implication that she's not fit to do what any cab-rank waterman has the right to do—choose the law-makers of the country? It's absurd on the face of it."

"But there are many ways of influencing the country besides voting for a member of Parliament," said Leslie.

"Of course," Christie replied, "but that again isn't the point. The point is that the disability is insulting and degrading and unbearable. It doesn't matter whether it's right or wrong; what matters is that half the inhabitants of the country are debarred from the privilege of choosing a representative merely through an accident of sex. Women may do everything else: write, lecture, teach, control business, entertain, act, sing, become doctors, lawyers, scholars, even sit on the throne; but they mayn't vote. They may marry members of Parliament and be the mothers of members of Parliament, but they mayn't vote for members of Parliament. Aren't you beginning to see some of the idiocy of it?"

"To my mind," said Richard Oast, "a large part of the hostility to the suffrage movement is pure caution on the part of the men. Men are naturally more self-protective than women: they look ahead—or perhaps it would be truer to say that

they feel ahead — and safeguard themselves. The more imaginative men — the artists, and so forth — don't mind the suffrage, and even support it, because they not only rather like the novelty and change, but because they know instinctively that no matter what happens they personally will be all right: women will still want them; Meredith, you remember, was for the cause. But the ordinary unattractive man is quite aware already that this movement is leading to something very like a sex war, and that with every concession towards power that he makes his reign is shortened. Every recruit to the suffragette army is a loss to the seraglio of this person. That's what he fears. That's why he's so bitter and pig-headed."

"Very good," said Christie.

"But I don't think the cause has much of a future," Oast continued, "because I don't think there will ever be enough disinterested women — or enough women sufficiently discontented — to carry it. It is essentially a single-woman's war, and the young stalwarts will continually be getting engaged and dropping out. Nature is the real enemy of such struggles, not man. Nature has arranged it that most women want one man only, and want nothing apart from him. That's the trouble, Christie. Your malcontents will always be numerous, and possibly always determined; but they will be a minority; most women will continue to be unmoved — they will have other and more primitive fish to fry. Nor, I fear, did Nature give the sex any great faculty of mobilization. They will fail there too."

"The whole movement," said Dr. Staminer, "is linked together. That is partly why it is so dangerous, and, to my mind, so sure to succeed. I did not think of it at the time: but looking back on my life now, I can see that I have watched, although inarticulately, every stage. I can remember the girls —my own sisters among them—of the fifties and sixties, how docile they were, how content to wait for their wooers and do only the feminine things. Archery and croquet, both staid and almost stationary pastimes, were, after riding, their only open-air games with the nobler sex.

"Then the seventies, with the arrival of lawn tennis and woman's first willingness to be hot and breathless too. Looking at it now," the doctor continued, "I believe that the whole river of feminine independence may be traced to the first drop of perspiration caused by the first game of mixed doubles. It was that drop, and the woman's disregard of it, that began the new movement towards equality.

"What the seventies and lawn tennis began," he continued, "the eighties and the bicycle enforced. Because it was the bicycle that killed the power of the parent and chaperon. The difference in the English girl before and after the bicycle is almost indescribable. She mounted the bicycle nominally to ride with her brother, or even to get more quickly to choir practice, and it carried her to emancipation.

"The typewriter," the doctor added, smiling at Ann, "came at the same time, to act as an intermediary for her introduction to city life—also a step towards enfranchisement. In the eighties

came also the woman's club and the woman's cigarette.

"And then the nineties, which brought golf to every suburb and a ladies' day to every club, and hockey and cricket to every girls' school; and behold a girl had ceased utterly to be a girl, a superior, delicate creature of blushes and sensitivenesses, to be touched reverently like a peach, but was now a good fellow, and a man need no longer mind his manners when he was with her.

"And by the time the new century arrived," the doctor concluded, "women were so active in so many directions once reserved for men only that the suffragette movement was as logical a proceeding as the fire that follows an earthquake. It is the future that I think of with most gravity, for nothing of course stands still, and a sex war would be a horrible thing."

"What a splendid summary!" said Christie. "I wish you'd write that for me."

"I've forgotten it already," said the doctor.

"It's all right," said Leslie. "Christie hasn't."

"Few of the aggressive body probably begin the campaign as the enemies of man, but fewer go on with it in any other spirit. That is what is so dangerous," said the doctor.

"I don't know any suffragettes," said Mr. Ingleside. "I should rather like to."

"I know an out-and-outer," said Ramer. "I wonder if I might bring her here."

"Of course," said Mr. Ingleside. "That's just what we want."

"I'm scared to death of her," said Ramer, "but I'll try."

There was no doubt about the whole-heartedness of Miss Lily Custer as a suffragette. She was fragile and small, but independence and courage were stamped on her. She had short curling hair and was pale and determined, with large grey eyes and thin red lips: a very noticeable face. She wore always a grey tailor-made dress and a man's collar, with a black tie. Her hands were slender and long and very white. Miss Custer had been to Girton and had done fairly well, and then discovered that she wanted to be an artist. She still had a studio, but it had become a political centre, and nothing had been painted there for months — except the character of man generally, and Cabinet Ministers in particular, in black. Some of the most desperate of the ruses of the party had been planned by this little delicate creature. It was she who had got right into the courtyard of the House of Commons disguised as the chauffeur of a taxi-cab — having spent some weeks in motor-driving to qualify herself for the trick. It was she who thought out the great Downing Street invasions, when three of her colleagues disguised as French milliners got into the boudoir of the Prime Minister's wife, and having locked the door, lectured that lady upon their ideals and intentions for an hour before help could be secured. It was she who successfully engineered the historic kidnapping and detention of the Home Secretary. Her name, however, seldom appeared. Most of all was it she who kept the movement at white heat, her inventive

genius never allowing it to lack some alluring element of romance. Whether she wanted the vote was a question which it would be difficult to answer with any confidence; but certain it was that she held men in contempt and desired excitement and power. Her attitude to men was one of calm and impregnable assurance and superiority. The result was that they feared her, and yet, like moths, were unable to resist burning their wings in the cold flame of her disdain. She never relaxed; even those that professed themselves suffragettes she seemed to despise also, perhaps (who knows?) for the want of manliness that their creed involved!

Our Lady of Misrule (as she had been called) came, but the evening was not a success. She realized quickly that there were no converts here: more, that she was in a company of men who cared so little for causes and battle-cries that they probably forgot that they had votes themselves. Christie, it is true, was present, with his new fervour, but Christie would never out of a clear sky have advocated votes for women; he had come over merely through a sense of the injustice of withholding them — a very different thing. Moreover, he had not resigned his post on a paper notoriously hostile to the movement: his words, therefore, to one who would have made any sacrifice for her beliefs, were valueless.

Richard Oast did his best to discuss with detachment the policy of militancy and aggression, but Miss Custer seemed to deprecate not only criticism but even the most harmless questions. She knew she was right.

The M.P. suggested that there might conceivedly be people to hold the view that women who persecuted and vilified and assaulted statesmen because they were held to have broken their word were not providing the best credentials as responsible electors. Miss Custer only smiled.

"What else are they to do?" Christie asked impatiently.

"Well," said Oast, "many causes have been won by waiting."

Miss Custer's smile darkened to a scowl. "Wait!" she said. "Haven't we waited?"

"*You* haven't," said Oast. "You haven't had time to wait. You're only a child."

"The others, then?" said Miss Custer.

"In my opinion," said Oast — "and you can disregard it, for it is only the opinion of a man — they had been waiting splendidly, and were just beginning to reap the harvest of their quiet efficiency and good sense, when the fruit was dashed from their hands by the impatient high spirits of the younger faction — the Mænad Malcontents, shall I call them? I know of mothers who for years have steadily been proving their right to vote, whose own daughters fresh from school have ruined their chances for years to come."

"But even if the younger members' tactics are too violent," said Miss Custer, "isn't it absurd to allow that to disqualify the older ones?"

"Ah," said Oast. "You are talking as if the world were logical. That is what one does when one is young and powerful. It may be absurd, but then we are absurd; life is absurd. We act upon a thou-

sand impulses before logic's still small voice can be heard at all. And very naturally. For logic, with all its merits, has no heart and no warm blood. Absurd, yes; but it would be even more absurd if men, after viewing the political aspirations of women with suspicion for all these centuries, should suddenly say, 'Well, they use dog-whips across the faces of our rulers very handily; they worry and annoy our Prime Minister with extraordinary persistence and skill, and do their best to ruin his health and nerves; they throw stones with unexpected accuracy. We are now satisfied. They shall have the vote to-morrow: these are exactly the kind of people to elect representatives wisely.' Do you honestly," Oast concluded, turning smilingly to Miss Custer, "do you honestly believe that you are going the right way to work?"

Miss Custer said nothing. She was not, in fact, a dialectician. Her rebellions were her arguments. At last, however, she spoke. "Men are so contemptible," she said.

Everybody laughed, even Christie. Not that they felt themselves to be so wonderfully worthy: but the little woman was so desperately vitriolic.

"Well," said Oast, "I'm not going to argue that. If anyone says to me, 'You are contemptible,' I am contemptible. To that person, I mean. Happily, every man — even the lowest — can find some one who thinks a little better of him than that, and many of us are fortunate in never mixing with the severer critics at all."

"I mean as a class," said Miss Custer. "As a class

men are contemptible. They don't really care for women a scrap. They want them as pets and servants, and directly that bores them, they escape to their offices and clubs. It's men that men want with any steadiness. I know that; and you know it. That's why I hate them so, and that's why I mean to go on doing my best to keep them in discomfort."

Miss Custer made, however, one convert—more than convert, slave—and that was Sybil Aylward, who was spending a week with Ann. Miss Aylward had always leaned towards rebellion, and here was a leader worth the name. She gazed fascinated upon her all the evening, and helped her on with her things at the close of it with proud hands. "May I come and see you?" she asked. "Yes, do," said Miss Custer, and named an hour.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH OUR LADY OF MISRULE HEARS THE WORST

SYBIL and Ann arrived punctually at the little revolutionary's studio on the day appointed, to find it already populous.

It was a strange company. All women, of course, and mostly mischievous, for Miss Custer attracted only that variety. They were prepared to do anything for what was called the cause, so long as it embarrassed the Government and kept the fire at white heat. Whatever feelings they may individually have entertained for individual men, their attitude as a whole to the male sex was obviously one neither of reverence nor fear. So long as they were together, the old dependence had passed: that was certain. They neither expected chivalry nor esteemed it. But whether they trusted each other to maintain this front for ever is another matter. Women, even political women, are still daughters of Eve, doomed by an ancient law, so venerable as to have been inscribed upon the statute book of fate before the beginnings of memory, to be intimate friends only rarely, doomed to a clashing of interests, doomed to an imperfect frankness.

But here, within closed doors, and the purple,

green, and white floating free over all, they came very near a single purpose unvitiated by suspicion.

It was a dangerous air for Sybil to breathe. Ann could stand it, for she had work to do and little subjectivity, and she was not a fighter. But Sybil was rich and unemployed, and all her natural tendencies towards anarchy and denial were likely to be nourished here. For the vote she cared nothing; but for an outlet for energy she cared much. It is clear enough that until the suffrage movement began this element in virtuous feminine nature had never had play. No wonder that it made such an appeal to the firebrands, the elves, and the malcontents. At last they had power, power not only utterly apart from man, their successful rival in nearly every branch of activity, but power absolutely against him.

Miss Custer made excellent coffee, and there were cigarettes for all who wanted them. The two strangers being there — especially Ann, whose eyes were too candid for treachery, and yet who was manifestly not of the party — no secrets of the campaign were discussed; only the generalities of war. News was brought of allies absent in gaol; a late comer had great tidings of an anonymous gift of five thousand pounds to the funds; various triumphs at recent public meetings were recorded; one or two bruises were shown.

The talk then ran for the most part on an absent stalwart, one Magda, the best speaker of this younger faction. She had gone abroad to recover, and her return had from time to time been post-

poned, not too greatly to the satisfaction of the others, who looked to her silver tongue to tell them exactly what they thought and where they stood.

They were all jolly enough until suddenly the door was flung open and in burst a girl as though pursued. She closed it and held the handle in her right hand, as they do on the stage, and pressed her left to her heart as she leaned back rigidly. Her face was white and she panted.

"Whatever is it?" some one asked.

"Magda!" she exclaimed.

"Well, what about her?"

"Tell us quick."

"Is she ill?"

The girl moved to a chair and sank into it. "Worse than that," she said.

"Not dead!" exclaimed Miss Custer.

"Worse," said the girl.

A shudder ran round the room, and Miss Custer's lips became hard and contemptuous.

"Engaged, I suppose?" she said, with a terrible coldness.

"Worse," said the girl.

"My God!" said Miss Custer, in a whisper, "married!"

They looked at each other in dismay.

"But," said one of the older ones at last, "why are we so hasty? Perhaps she has married a man who sympathizes with us. Rich, too. That would be splendid."

But the girl who had brought the ill tidings gave no hope. "He's well enough off," she said, "but

there's nothing to expect from him. He's dead against us. A perfect Turk."

"The traitor!" said Miss Custer. "But I never felt sure of her. She never really knew how to treat men. She always softened under them. That changed manner, changed voice, which women keep for men — I used to notice them directly. Men!" — she used the word as though it was a whiplash with which to scourge the whole sex. "There's no chance for us until we have learnt to treat men like snakes."

No one present quite believed her, but they did not care to engage her in battle, at any rate just then, and a murmur of acquiescence ran round.

"How did you hear about it?" the messenger was asked.

"I met Magda's sister," she replied. "She told me. Magda has been away for a long time — that's why she went away. She said — her sister, I mean — that Magda's terribly in love."

Miss Custer turned to marble.

"They're in Spain now; they are not to be back for months."

There was a long silence. Every one was nervous and stunned.

Miss Custer, who had been staring at her cigarette smoke with large, despairing eyes, got up. "Well," she said, "I'm going out. Stay on here as long as you like, but bang the door after you or the bolt won't catch. This marriage is too horrible, too ghastly. You'll all do it, I expect. I can't trust one of you. You're all hopeless when one of these

frauds comes along. The world wasn't made for serious people: it was made for the weak and the treacherous."

She disappeared, and the others looked at each other with disquietude.

"Poor Lily!" said one. "She takes it too much to heart."

"Poor Lily!" said another. "Oughtn't some one to run after her?"

But no one stirred, not even the speaker.

Sybil caught Ann's arm. "Come away," she said: "we're strangers," and they got up.

Their movement relieved the strain, and the others prepared to go too.

As for Lily Custer, she held up her little tense white face to the rain, and grew calmer as the drops beat upon it. But she knew what Napoleon felt not only at Waterloo but at St. Helena. And her new knowledge did not stop there. Perhaps she knew also what Magda's feelings were. . . .

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH ANN TAKES DOWN A LETTER AND A SPEECH

THE work at Miss Beautiman's was not done entirely in the office. Several times a week the girls were wanted elsewhere, to take down letters; and on one occasion, after Ann had been there for a month and Miss Beautiman had no one else to send in reply to a sudden summons, Ann volunteered to go. For the most part these clients were the ordinary dull business-men of London, whose own typists were away or machines broken; but now and then Ann had better luck. Mr. Ruddie, for instance. "I'm very sorry," Miss Beautiman had said, "he's such a jumpy, angry little man: but he's good as gold at heart. You just mustn't mind him. It's only his way, after all."

Ann was therefore quite prepared for the state of fume and fret in which her momentary employer was seething.

"Hallo," he said, "another girl! Why is it always a stranger?"

Ann said she was very sorry.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "It doesn't matter a damn. Nothing matters in this bungled world. If you ever have any children, my dear, strangle them at birth. Now we'll start, if you're ready."

Ann waited patiently while Mr. Ruddie paced the floor. "*Dear Sir*," he began, but at once withdrew it. "No, I won't say dear. He's not dear; why, I'm having a row with him. Why should we perpetuate these miserable medievalisms? Dear, indeed! Say *Sir* instead. No, wait a minute; I believe that the third person would be more effective. Begin, *Mr. Victor Ruddie begs to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Pingree's letter of the 15th.* Have you got that? No, stop. What the devil does begs mean? I don't beg. *Mr. Victor Ruddie acknowledges the receipt of Mr. Pingree's letter of the 15th.* That's all right. Now we can go ahead. *So far from doing what Mr. Pingree wants, Mr. Ruddie will see him* ——" Mr. Ruddie here paused to call at the top of his voice, "Mr. Packer! Mr. Packer!"

The door opened, and a patient head was pushed through.

"It's not wise, is it, to swear in a letter?" Mr. Ruddie inquired.

"No," said Mr. Packer, "it's not."

"Just what I thought," said Mr. Ruddie. "Don't say damned, my dear," he added to Ann. "It's a mistake. Never swear when you're having a row, or the other party will forget the subject of the row and accuse you of using foul language. It's one of the meanest tricks in this dirty little world, which is controlled, my dear, by the mediocre and crafty for the mediocre and gullible. But to proceed. *So far from doing what Mr. Pingree wants, Mr. Ruddie is inspired merely to reiterate his previous refusal with additional emphasis.* Have you got that down?

That's rather good, I think. Just read it as far as it goes, my dear."

Ann read it.

"What a nice voice you've got," said Mr. Ruddie. "They send such cockneys as a rule. Have you got a young man?"

Ann replied very shortly that she had not. She was beginning to be vexed, but Mr. Ruddie, although he was perfect material for the readily quarrelsome, had never really vexed any human soul. He was too eager, too transparent, too amusing, too naïve.

"It's all right," he said, noticing her abruptness. "Don't be cross with me if I say silly things. I'm the kind that has to say everything in order to say anything. I talk, and you must sift it to find the sense, don't you see. Don't have a young man yet, my dear. Wait till you're thirty. No woman should marry till she's thirty and no man till he's forty. You know what you want then. I'm serious about it, my dear, because I have done the other thing. I married when I was twenty-one and my wife was only nineteen. . . . Just read what you've got, my dear."

Ann read it again.

"*And*," said Mr. Ruddie, resuming his dictation, "*it is Mr. Ruddie's deliberate opinion that the repetition of a letter containing practically word for word an impudent demand that has already been repudiated is the action of* ——" Mr. Ruddie again stopped to call for Mr. Packer, and Mr. Packer again appeared.

"It's not libellous, is it," Mr. Ruddie asked, "to call a man a cad."

"No," said Mr. Packer. "It's not libellous, but ——"

"But what?" Mr. Ruddie snapped.

"But it's not always expedient."

"Expedient be blowed!" said Mr. Ruddie, turning again to Ann and completing the sentence — "*the action of a cad.* There now, copy that, and we'll fire it off and see what happens."

It was tantalizing to Ann never to know the end of this passage of arms; but that is the tragic side of the typists' life: they don't see the replies.

On another occasion Ann was sent to the Grand Hotel to take down a speech. This she enjoyed immensely. The speaker was a shy and simple country gentleman who, much as he hated the platform, had from a sense of public duty consented to act as the chairman of a public meeting; and with him was his barrister son. Ann found the father and son in a sitting-room, with a great deal of notepaper on the table and newspapers all over the floor. Mr. Bellingham was nervous and kindly: Dick was exceedingly pleased with himself. They were both smoking when Ann entered, but Mr. Bellingham at once threw away his cigar. Dick, who was young enough to make as few distinctions as possible between men and women, especially women who were earning their own living, retained his. "I like a girl to be a good fellow," he used to say.

"I hope you can take a quick note?" Mr. Bellingham asked.

"Fairly quick," Ann replied.

"Quick enough for you, I'll be bound," said Dick to his father. "Fluency was never your long suit."

"Well," said Mr. Bellingham, after he had opened the window a little, "let us make a start."

"*Ladies and Gentlemen,*" he began, "*we are met together this evening to listen to Mr. Kyrle-Fanshawe, M.P., who will address us on the critical situation of the moment. This is a matter on which every one present has opinions. For myself* ——"

"Hold hard, my dear man," said Dick. "You are going much too fast. You can't plunge into things like that."

"Why, what have I missed out?" Mr. Bellingham inquired. "I've said too much, as a matter of fact, because of course every one will know what Kyrle-Fanshawe is going to speak about and why they are there."

"Of course they know it," said Dick, "but the essence of oratory is to tell people what they know already and butter them up. You mustn't talk as though you were in your office."

"Well," said Mr. Bellingham wearily, "you begin it."

Dick needed no second invitation. "Now, Miss," he said — "*Ladies and Gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure to see so many of you here to-night. I have attended many important meetings in my time* —— Am I going too fast?"

"No," said Ann. "I can just manage it."

"I'll try to be a bit more andante," said Dick — "*but I never remember to have seen an audience at*

once so representative and so intelligently anticipative. There, father, that's the style."

"Great heavens, I can't talk like that!" exclaimed Mr. Bellingham.

"Great heavens, you must!" said Dick. "There are certain fixed laws, and you've got to obey them. Now, Miss. *It gives me particular pleasure to see on the platform our old friend Mr. Stick-in-the-Mud.*"

"Who on earth's that?" asked Mr. Bellingham.

"Oh, you must find out from the agent. There's sure to be some one there who will need special mention. There always is. Now, Miss, please: *We are met here on this auspicious occasion*" — Mr. Bellingham groaned — "*on this auspicious occasion, to welcome Mr. Kyrle-Fanshawe, whose name has for years been familiar on our lips as a household word,*" — Mr. Bellingham groaned again, — "*but whom most of us now for the first time meet face to face. There is no need for me to tell you what Mr. Kyrle-Fanshawe has done — how he has been one of the mainstays of the party for nearly a decade — how he has always been watchful to raise politics above mere party, and has made the welfare of the country his pole-star.*"

"My dear Dick, I can't talk that way, and nothing shall make me," said Mr. Bellingham. "It's disgusting. I know nothing about this man. I'm only taking the chair because I feel strongly on the question. I never allude to pole-stars: it's not my way. A man must be characteristic."

"Well, father, you've got to play the game," said Dick. "If you take the chair, you must behave

accordingly. Now go on yourself. I've got you safely through the opening. There'll be prolonged cheers at the point where I left off, and that will cover the transition from my style to yours."

Mr. Bellingham sighed and began again, continuing smoothly for some minutes.

"That's better, father," said his son; "but of course you're no real good. You say what you mean at once."

"And why not?" Mr. Bellingham inquired in some heat.

"Why not? Because it's against the rules of platform oratory. You say simply, 'I say.' You ought to put it, 'I have no hesitation in saying.' Don't you see?"

Mr. Bellingham was understood to say that he saw but did not agree.

"Again," said Dick, "you say, 'I can't remember.' That's conversation, it's not oratory. You ought to say, 'I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that in the whole course of my life, looking back upon it with the utmost vigilance, I cannot recollect ever having heard a more monstrous proposition.' They will give you applause for that."

"I don't want applause," said Mr. Bellingham.

"Oh, nonsense, dad, of course you do. Every one wants applause; and in meetings like yours you need it too. It's electricity. Without it, you'll be as flat as stale beer."

"By the way," Mr. Bellingham suddenly remarked, with much anxiety, "what am I to do if the suffragettes cut in?"

"Do? Nothing. Have them thrown out, and don't say a word. Just wait and look dignified."

"Yes, you know," said Mr. Bellingham, "but I can't allow that. I can't see women handled roughly. It is too horrible."

"You must get used to it," Dick said. "They ask for it, you know."

"I can't help it," said Mr. Bellingham. "It revolts me."

"Well, you've got to choose," said Dick, "between two courses. Either you let them go on interrupting, and the meeting is ruined, or you fire them."

"But don't you — ah — think I might reason with them? Show them the fallacy? The — ah — fundamental difference between men and women, you know. Woman, the mother, the very roof-tree of the home — and so forth. I doubt if it has ever been put to them quite like that."

"Roof-tree be jiggered," said Dick. "It's as bad as pole-star, too. No, they've got past all that. Believe me, there's only one thing to do. Fire them."

"Yes," said Mr. Bellingham, "all very well. But do you know that your mother has come to sympathize with them very deeply?"

Dick whistled.

"Sh!" said Mr. Bellingham, glancing at Ann, who bent her head over her notes in a passion of deciphering zeal.

"It's awkward when the roof-tree's against you," said Dick. "Dear old mater, I must come home for

a week-end and reason with her. Suffragettes indeed! She'll be a vegetarian next. And a Christian Scientist!"

"She is one already," said Mr. Bellingham.

"Expect me on Friday night," said Dick.

"Well," said Mr. Bellingham, with a sigh, "let's hope that Mr. Kyrle-Fanshawe is not sufficiently important for any of the suffragettes to come to his meeting. It is Cabinet Ministers they go for as a rule. Are you a suffragette, Miss — ah — Miss ——?"

"I'm greatly interested in the movement," said Ann.

"And what is your view of my chances of getting through safely?" Mr. Bellingham said.

Ann said that she had no views at all.

"You don't know them at head-quarters?" he asked a little wistfully.

Ann said that she did not.

Mr. Bellingham sighed again. "Let us proceed," he said. He brought his speech to an end without further difficulty, and Dick pronounced it, on the whole, satisfactory, although much too mild.

"Well, that's over," Mr. Bellingham exclaimed, with a sigh of relief. "Now perhaps we can think of lunch."

"Over!" replied Dick. "What about your speech to follow his?"

"Do I speak again?" Mr. Bellingham asked in alarm.

"Again! My dear father, you speak twice more. You speak once to say you never heard, and you are sure no one present ever heard, a more eloquent and

powerful exposition of facts and principles than that delivered by Mr. Kyrle-Fanshawe ——"

"But suppose I don't think so?" Mr. Bellingham retorted. "I've always heard he's a bad speaker."

"My dear father," replied Dick, "you make me tired. Aren't you the chairman of the meeting? Very well, then, you think his speech perfect. A chairman has no alternative. The idea of dragging criticism in! It's preposterous."

"Very well," said Mr. Bellingham. "But you said I had to speak twice. What is the other occasion?"

"In reply to the vote of thanks to you, of course."

"Is that necessary? Must there be a vote of thanks?"

"My dear antediluvian parent," said Dick, "you seem bent upon vitiating all the good feeling of public meetings — bringing in a crude indecency that must in the end degenerate into the plain give-and-take of a commercial transaction. Of course it's necessary. Of course there will be a vote of thanks to you, and of course you must say that never in your life have you been spoken of so charmingly, and even though you know the praise to be unearned, you will never forget it so long as you remember anything."

"I needn't say much?" Mr. Bellingham inquired.

"No, you can make it as short as you like — as long as you don't offend the proposer by your curtness. Who will it be, by the way?"

"I haven't heard," said Mr. Bellingham; "but probably Henderson."

"The butcher?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Lord!" said Dick. "Has he paid that money yet?"

"No," said Mr. Bellingham.

"Then," said Dick, "you're lost. He'll lay it on with a trowel."

"Yes, I'm afraid he'll be fulsome," said Mr. Bellingham.

"Rancid," said Dick.

"Well, I wish I was well out of it," said Mr. Bellingham, as he turned once more to Ann to complete his ordeal.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH A CITIZEN OF A COUNTRY WITH A FUTURE VISITS A COUNTRY WITH A PAST

MR. INGLESIDE laid down one of his letters with a sigh. "Mr. Waler arrived at Liverpool yesterday," he said, "and he will call on us this evening."

"But who is Mr. Waler?" Ann asked.

"Mr. Waler is an American who has an introduction to me. He is alone. Mrs. Waler, he explains, could not make the trip, as she had hoped to do. We must ask him to dinner. He is going to stay close by, at the Cecil."

Mr. Waler was tall and thin and grave: one of those mirthless Americans who use the language of humour about everything but themselves and their nation; who take things as they come; and whose attitude to life is largely that of a placid and very solvent customer in a store. Like so many Americans, he uttered every remark, even the commonest expression of opinion, as if he were on oath. The extra drop of nervous fluid which (according to Colonel Higginson) God added when he made the American may have been secreted somewhere in his anatomy, but it certainly never found its way to

his conversation. He was, also, like many Americans, a remorseless unloader. Mr. Waler had been in business, with the success that seems to us here to dog the footsteps of his whole nation, and now, having retired, he had taken up comparative education as a hobby.

He arrived punctually, and before shaking hands with his host and Ann pronounced their names impressively; which, since no English guest ever can catch or retain the name of the person to whom he is introduced, would be an impossible habit to acclimatize here, even though a very excellent one. Mr. Waler, glancing at Mr. Ingleside's swallow-tailed coat, then apologized for his own attire; but he had understood, he said, that in England it was the custom, when there was no dinner party but only a friendly and easy gathering, for Tuxedos to be permitted.

"Mrs. Waler and I," he said, "make a point of allowing our guests at Umsquot absolute liberty, and possibly the habit has been bad for me. In Rome, I always say, one should do as the Romans do; within bounds, of course. I believe with our President, Mr. Taft, that an American should never cease to be an American anywhere, but at the same time I think that it would be an error for his nationality to be betrayed by his costume. If it would not delay dinner, Miss Ingleside, I would like to step across to the Hotel Cecil and just change this Tuxedo for a claw-hammer coat like your father's."

This, however, was not permitted, for Mr. Ingleside solved the problem by slipping out of the room

and exchanging his claw-hammer for what in America is known as a Tuxedo and here as a dinner-jacket.

Mr. Waler's admiration of his tact was intense. "I shall be mailing a letter to Mrs. Waler to-morrow morning," he said, "and I shall tell her this story. Mrs. Waler will be delighted. There is no better authority on the unwritten laws of etiquette than Mrs. Waler."

These sartorial nuances having ceased to monopolize his attention, Mr. Waler was free to generalize.

"You have a very convenient location here, Mr. Ingleside," he said. "I don't see how you could be better fixed, with the river right there and the heart of London so near. I have always heard that Charing Cross is the heart of London, and I wished, in the small hours last night, that it wouldn't beat so hard. They seemed to be shunting all the time."

"I thought," said Mr. Ingleside, "that after New York London was like the grave for silence."

"New York, yes," said Mr. Waler. "But not Umsquot. Umsquot is a peaceful hamlet thirty miles from New York. I am very sorry," he continued, "that Mrs. Waler is not with me. Mrs. Waler is a great connoisseur of domiciles, and this one would give her real pleasure."

At dinner the conversation turned upon differences between America and England, English institutions, the Abbey, and so forth. Like so many Americans who come to England, Mr. Waler had no apparent reverence for anything except his wife and the intellectual and moral eminence of certain of his country's public characters, in speaking of whom his voice

broke and his eyes filled with tears. Americans will probably never understand the Englishman's claim to the right to criticize those whom he esteems, just as the English will never understand the American's willingness to forego that agreeable privilege.

The new portrait of Pepys caught Mr. Waler's eye, and he asked who it was; and when it was explained by what right the diarist had so honoured a place, his excitement was really delightful to watch.

"And am I really taking dinner," he said, "under a roof that once sheltered Samuel Pepys? Well, this is a great evening. I shall never forget this evening. America," Mr. Waler continued, "is a great country; but it is a country with a future. Nothing can make it a country with a past. England is a country with a past."

"And no future?" Mr. Ingleside asked.

"I think," said Mr. Waler tactfully, "that its past is the more noticeable. If we want the past, we must come to Europe. Europe is our playground. There is no playground for a country with a future like a country with a past. We," he sighed, "we have no Pepys."

"No," said Mr. Ingleside, "but you have Dooley."

"Yes," said Ann, "and Louisa M. Alcott. I used to love her books."

"Ah!" said Mr. Waler, "you should talk with Mrs. Waler about the genius of Miss Alcott. She once read an essay upon her before the Umsquot Summer School.

"Mr. Ingleside," said Mr. Waler, as he examined his host's shelves after dinner, "I see that you have

here the works of Walter Pater. I suppose you know the commentary on Pater by Dr. Winthrop P. Musker?" Mr. Ingleside had to confess ignorance.

"Dr. Musker," said Mr. Waler, "is a very charming man: one of the most valued members of our society at Umsquot. Mrs. Musker is a very lovely woman, and she and Mrs. Waler are very intimate. Dr. Musker will go far.

"Miss Ingleside, are you fond of poetry?" Mr. Waler asked.

Ann said she was fond of the poetry she liked.

"I expect you don't know the work of Dr. Cyrus Weedling," said Mr. Waler. "Dr. Cyrus Weedling is a very remarkable young man, a graduate of Harvard, and now on the staff of the *Senator*, one of our leading papers. His verses have attracted a considerable amount of attention in America, where we are much interested in poetry. Mrs. Waler thinks very highly of them. One of his lyrics was dedicated to Mrs. Waler."

"And what is his work like?" Mr. Ingleside asked.

"Well," said Mr. Waler, "it is difficult to say, but it will give you a good notion if I describe him as being a Keats with more reality and a Browning with more music."

"He has a shorter name than most American poets," said Mr. Ingleside. "The poets who write in the American magazines very often have names that are longer than their poems."

Mr. Waler acknowledged the criticism with dignity. "On my return, Miss Ingleside," he said, "I shall have much pleasure in mailing you a copy of

Dr. Weedling's last book, and I will get Mrs. Waler to mark her favourites in the contents with a little pencil cross. It will add largely to the book's interest.

"Well, good-night, Mr. Ingleside," said Mr. Waler, an hour or so later. "I've had a bully evening. My only regret is that Mrs. Waler was not with me. Mrs. Waler is a very exceptional woman, Mr. Ingleside. There is no subject that she has not mastered. Mrs. Waler passed through Vassar with great distinction."

Mr. Ingleside expressed his satisfaction in a tone of voice which suggested that such success was inevitable in the bride of Mr. Waler, and asked if there was any particular thing in London that Mr. Waler wished to see.

"Since you ask me, Mr. Ingleside," said Mr. Waler, "I will tell you. I should greatly esteem the privilege of seeing some of your most influential authors in the flesh. Is that a reasonable proposition?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Ingleside. "As it happens, the Royal Literary Fund Dinner is to be held next week. I shall have much pleasure in taking you as my guest. Most of the writing swells will be there. Whose features are you most anxious to gaze upon?"

"Well," said Mr. Waler, "I should not care to return and face Mrs. Waler again without being in a position to tell her something about the appearance of Mr. Maurice Hewlett. Mrs. Waler considers Mr. Maurice Hewlett one of your brightest authors. I have heard her say that in him vitality and men-

tality may be observed in their highest and loveliest union."

"Very good," said Mr. Ingleside.

"Mrs. Waler," continued Mr. Waler, "has all Mr. Maurice Hewlett's works bound in uniform binding. There is no other set in Umsquot that is either so handsome or so complete, although most of our friends there admire him too. Mrs. Waler is very fastidious about her books."

"To see Mr. Hewlett will be easy," said Mr. Ingleside. "He will almost certainly be there."

"It would also give me much pleasure to have the opportunity of seeing Mr. Austin Dobson," said Mr. Waler. "Mrs. Waler is of opinion that Mr. Austin Dobson's poetry is as near perfection within its own limits as is humanly possible. When we last made the trip to Europe, Mrs. Waler took a carriage and drove out to Ealing in the hope of finding Mr. Austin Dobson and assuring him of our admiration; but the maid informed us he was not at home. You may not be aware that Mr. Austin Dobson has founded a school of poetry in America. In a recent number of the *Focus* was an article by Dr. M'Callum K. Dwyer, a friend of Mrs. Waler's, on the influence of Mr. Austin Dobson on the genius of Frank Dempster Sherman, Clinton Scollard, Walter Learned, and Roderick W. Figg. It was a very remarkable article, and created considerable attention."

"I hope that Mr. Dobson will be present," said Mr. Ingleside. "In default of him, there will be Mr. Gosse."

"Mr. Edmund W. Gosse?" said Mr. Waler. "He

and Mrs. Waler have long corresponded on literary matters. It will be a great pleasure to shake his hand. How I wish Mrs. Waler were here, not only for her sake but for his." With these words Mr. Waler took his leave, with a heavy punctilio that left the Inglesides racked by a suspicion that their manners single and collectively were of the sty.

"Sing some old English song, Ann, quick," said Mr. Ingleside, when they were alone again. "He is a vurry cultivated, lovely man, but sing some old English song quick."

Ann sang "Mowing the Barley."

"Now let us look at the river," said Mr. Ingleside.

They leaned over the embankment coping and watched the dark, cruel water. It was perfectly still to-night: no movement at all: the texture of the surface was smooth almost as of oil: it intensified every light it caught and gave them back with twice their brilliance. There was nothing moving in the stream, but a few cabs drove by, and the bridges rumbled as trains passed at Charing Cross. The light of session burned in the clock tower, showing that the law-makers were still at work, while on every seat three or four homeless creatures were twisted into incredible attitudes for their night's rest.

Ann looked at them and shuddered — not with disgust but with the consciousness of anomaly.

"Can't anything be done?" she asked.

"Ask *them*," said her father, pointing to the House.

"But isn't it terrible?" she said.

"I suppose so," he replied. "For the old, certainly. And yet to be very poor is the next best

thing to being very rich. Some might even place it higher. The very poor are the only people who can do what they like. No one troubles about their clothes; they have no office hours; the meanest thing that happens to the good is a surprise and an excitement. And all the best food belongs to the poor. How I long sometimes for what they call snacks of fish! One could eat then! And sausages and mashed!"

The Literary Fund Dinner filled Mr. Waler with delight, but with little else, for he was so busy in identifying the company by means of the chart that he had no time to eat. He was at Buckingham Street early the next morning, to renew his thanks for so momentous an evening.

"I enjoyed it all immensely," said Mr. Waler again. "It was fine. My only grief was that Mrs. Waler was not with me. Mrs. Waler would have rejoiced in it. There were authors present whose works Mrs. Waler knows by heart. I have just cabled Mrs. Waler," he said, "that I shook Mr. Edmund W. Gosse's hand. It is an incident that will gratify not only Mrs. Waler but the whole of Umsquot."

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH A YOUNG GENTLEMAN OBTAINS NO LACK OF ADVICE

JOHN was annoyed when he heard that Ann had begun to work regularly. It was really with himself that he was vexed; but he transferred the responsibility to her.

"It's absurd," he said. "A girl like you! What do you want to earn your own living for, anyway? You're not poor."

"I want to be independent," said Ann. "Don't you?"

"All in good time," said John. "But I don't hold with independence in women. Women were meant to be looked after by men."

"What women are you looking after?" Ann asked.

"Oh, well, of course I don't say every man has a woman to look after, always; but at any rate what would my mother do without me, do you suppose?"

"I'm sorry," said Ann. "I thought it was she who looked after you."

"That's a low thing to say," said John. "Just because I haven't been able to find any congenial work just yet, you turn on me;" and he went off in a huff and had his hair expensively cut. Men have so many resources.

None the less he thought about his idleness a good

deal, and wrote to several of his friends for advice, and asked several more to lunch or dinner for the same purpose. They did themselves very well, as our ugly slang has it, and put in what John described to his mother as "some very useful evenings" at the Halls of Variety, sporadically discussing the great problem. John collected a number of opinions, covering in fact most of the walks in life that may be followed without loss either of caste or perspiration by a young gentleman of the moment.

"It's a pity you haven't got any grey matter," said Claude Fortescue, who was reading for the Bar, "or you might write. I don't mean books, of course. In the papers. Journalism's getting jolly classy, you know. It's quite the thing now for a journalist to have rooms in Mayfair or even over the Savoy. But of course you're not brainy."

"If you knew a few really oofy peers, you might be a bailiff," said Victor Wragg-Folcot, whose father had placed him on a handsome allowance with a firm of stockbrokers. "There's the Ducker, you know—he's dropped into a perfect three hundred a year, with plenty of mounts and a set of rooms, and all he has to do is to hear the men going to work in the morning and to play tennis with his employer's daughters. I believe you could do that quite as well as he does. In fact, I believe you could lie in bed and listen to men going to work as well as anybody in Europe."

"Oh, shut up!" said John, "don't rot. Tell me how one gets this kind of thing."

"Well," said Victor, "you are disqualified at once,

because in the first place you have to be a younger son, and in the second place you want heaps of influence. Piles of it. It comes briefly to this, that one's parents must know the right people."

"Don't you know anyone in need of a bailiff?" John asked.

"I do not," replied Victor. "But, on the other hand, I know at least thirty-five men in need of soft bailiff jobs."

Billy M'Gregor enjoyed his lunch immensely but was not helpful. "Ah, my dear boy," he said, over their cigars, "if only you had developed more seriousness of mind and purpose. I read in one of the papers the other day that the Archbishop of York — not, you observe, the primate, but only a secondary person — gets ten thousand pounds a year. Ten thousand of the very best, my dear John. And you have a kind face and good calves — in fact, everything.

"Success in life," he continued later, "all depends upon beginning right. Here am I, and here are you. I, who began right by being the only son of a wine-merchant of world-wide repute, am now, at the age of twenty-four, a partner and your guest. You, who began wrong by not being directed into a distinct groove or possessing a shrewd financial progenitor, are at the same age still seeking a *métier* (shall I say?) and paying for excellent but expensive meals. Remember, John, that work is not, as some suppose, the primal curse, but (a little more of that old brandy, please) the primal blessing. And now, I think, Lord's."

The Hon. Arthur Stacey, who was comfortably installed as private secretary to a Cabinet Minister, for whose daughter he had bought so much chocolate that an engagement seemed inevitable, advised a private secretaryship. "Not," he added, "that there's nothing to do; but discretion comes before labour. To put it concisely, if a little coarsely, the rule of the wise private secretary is Tact before Sweat. My man is getting quite a reputation as an administrator and a speaker ever since he allowed me to cut out the first and last paragraphs of all his speeches—the beginning being all gas and sham politeness, and the end all gas and sham patriotism. A residuum remains (supplied by the permanent official) which is excellent. You, of course, my dear John, are not gifted in that way; but what a pity you aren't! You would otherwise make a private secretary that any man might covet, for your tailor can really fit you, and you have a charming way with taxi-drivers."

Other friends suggested other means of livelihood, all picturesque and ingenious and everything but practical. The advantages of mastering a roulette system were put before him by Archie Capstan. Gerald Lake knew a man who by diligently purchasing lottery-tickets had at last won a prize of two thousand marks.

"With a little capital," wrote the Rev. Stephen Bidwell, once known as Boojum, but now curate of Milsted in Essex, "there's a lot of money in intensive gardening."

"I can't advise anything," wrote Hector Sands, from Birmingham, "but I am sure of one thing, and

that is that a Johnnie is a dam fool to-day if he knows nothing about driving a motor. If you take my tip, you'll learn a car upside down while you're waiting for something to materialize."

Ronny Clumber, when he was told of this, blew the suggestion into a beautiful cigarette ring.

"Motorin'!" he said. "Motorin's dead as mutton. Flyin's the thing now, my boy. I've just come back from Amiens, and I tell you it's great. I'm havin' a biplane built for me, with a Marinetti engine. There's nothin' like it. Motorin'—what's that? Dusty roads. Eyes full of grit. Police traps. Gaiety girls. Bad inns. Everything the same all the time. But flyin'! Flyin's new every trip. Think of being up there at forty miles an hour and lookin' down on the miserable Johnnies below! Worth doin'."

None the less it was Sands who won, and the next morning John came down to breakfast at eight o'clock, full of importance, and at once began to rage because it was not on the table.

"Eight o'clock," he muttered, "and nothing here. On a fine morning, too! No wonder England's going to the dogs," he continued, "with all this sunshine wasted. People should get up at six."

He rushed to the bell in a burst of impatience and rectitude.

"What on earth is the matter with your servants, mother?" he cried, as Mrs. Campion entered. "It's disgraceful the way they neglect their work. You're not firm enough with them. Look at the sun, too!"

"What is it, dear?" Mrs. Campion asked sweetly.

"What is it?" he replied, astonished. "Why, there's no breakfast. Here am I, busy and wanting to get away, and there's nothing to eat."

"Well, my dear boy, you know," said his mother, "that I don't have any breakfast, and you haven't been down before half-past nine for weeks."

"Well, I'm here now," said John, "and breakfast ought to be at eight—if not earlier," he added. "In future I shall be punctual."

Mrs. Campion smiled and said nothing.

After John had silently and critically consumed his meal, he ran to his room and returned with a bag in his hand.

"Are you going away?" Mrs. Campion asked.

"No," he said. "I'm going to work. Please will you lend me five pounds?"

"Five pounds!" Mrs. Campion exclaimed.

"Yes," he said. "I've decided I must not be idle and a burden to you any more. Every man ought to be independent. I am therefore going to learn to be a shover. Every man ought to know how to drive a car nowadays. There's no knowing when you may need it. Think of how awful it would be in Scotland," he added gravely, "if you were taken ill and there was no one to fetch a doctor."

"But," Mrs. Campion remarked, "we haven't got a car."

"No," said John, "we haven't. But some one else would have one. There's always a car near at hand; and how could you ask anyone else to get up in the dead of night to drive it? If I knew how to drive it, I could have it into the nearest town in no time, and

save your life. Lots of people have died through the want of a doctor like that, you know."

Mrs. Campion controlled her face with difficulty and opened her desk.

"Who is going to have the five pounds?" she asked.

"Some very decent people in the Vauxhall Bridge Road," said John. "They guarantee to turn you out a finished shover for a fiver. I've got some old clothes here to change into at the garage. Thanks awfully," he added, as his mother handed him the money. "It's only a loan, mind. In future I pay interest on all money you advance me. At the earliest possible date this shall be paid back, with five per cent. interest from this morning. Perhaps you'll work the sum out for me."

And he was off.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH WE ARE PRESENT AT THE CHRISTENING OF THE *CAPRICE*

ON arriving at Mr. Ingleside's rooms on the next Friday, the guests were surprised to find his study a very bower of flowers. Each in turn noticed it and commented upon it, each in turn was told by Ann that it was her father's birthday.

"He's fifty-two to-day," she said, "and he pretends to be furious about it: but of course that's absurd. He's not really so silly as to mind his birthday."

"What did you give him?" Dr. Staminer asked.

"I gave him a cigar-case," said Ann. "What else is there? It's so difficult to get presents for papa."

"Of course," said Dr. Staminer. "A well-to-do man of fifty-two has lived his life very badly if there is any present that he is really in want of."

"And Mrs. Boody made him a cake," Ann continued; "and he and I had lunch together at a swell restaurant, and then we went to the National Gallery. I always like it on Fridays because the copyists are at work and I like to see them. Some of them are so frightfully clever. Papa has commissioned Miss Beautiman to make me a copy of the little Cupid in Correggio's picture. Wasn't that nice? It was a perfect present, because it pleased her and it pleased me and it pleased him. After you're fifty, papa says, it is one's duty to give presents and not to receive them."

"With one enormously important exception," said Mr. Ingleside, coming in at this moment. "Isn't it so, Oast?"

Richard Oast smiled. "I shall never forgive myself," he said, "for not having it ready this afternoon."

"It doesn't matter a bit," said Mr. Ingleside, "especially as it's been wet. To-morrow will be fine — and then!"

"What are you talking about?" Ann asked.

"Wait and see," said her father. "'"To-morrow,"' " he quoted, "'is a lovely word, compared with which "to-day's" absurd.'"

"I don't like growing old," said Oast later. "One finds out so many things. And the worst of it is that however one may suspect, one cannot *know* anything before the time. There are things about life that one may suspect at twenty-five but cannot know until one is thirty; and then again there is a new series that one suspects at thirty but cannot know till one is forty. It is after forty that the real enlightenment sets in. The worst suspicions then begin to be proved, one by one. A man of our age who is not going to be wholly a cynic must fight furiously."

"What puzzles me," said Mr. Ingleside, "about our age is this: was life always as unsatisfactory and fleshy as one then finds it to be, or is the world getting worse?"

"The world," said Dr. Staminer, "is always the same. There are the same seaminesses and uglinesses all the time, but you have to grow into a knowledge of them. The ordinary healthy person,

thank the stars, does not come to observation of them until his youth is over. While that lasts he has other things to think about. We do not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge until our ordinary digestion is beginning to fail a little."

"To vary the epigram," said Leslie, "might you not say that it is not until we have false teeth that we bite the apple of good and evil."

"Very good," said Christie.

"I'm sorry you like it," Leslie replied, "because now it will go into an article for which you will get the credit."

"I never steal," said Christie; "I always acknowledge the source. I shall certainly use your epigram, but I shall attribute it to Sydney Smith."

"Why not to me?" Leslie asked.

"Well, for two reasons at least. One is that no one knows you, and it would therefore look silly; and the other is that if I did no one would think the remark really witty. Almost the first thing that a journalist needs is an instinct for names. To mention a name that is not 'up' is fatal. The public so hate humour except in papers which are labelled humorous, and which therefore need not be humorous at all because the label hypnotizes the reader into the belief that what he reads is funny — the public so hate humour and are so suspicious of wit that they have reduced the acceptable practitioners in those lines to the smallest possible number. For all practical purposes, all quoted jokes in newspapers have to be made by either Sydney Smith or Sir William Gilbert, and all

humorous situations paralleled either in Dickens or Lewis Carroll."

"I see," said Leslie sadly. "But you might give me a notion of what I must do to become well enough known to be quoted."

"The best way of all," said Christie, "is to die; but if you could write a funny play that every one went to see, you would have a chance. Another way is to be in some very serious situation conspicuously unassociated with jokes — such as in the pulpit or on the bench."

"Then there is no chance for a wit *per se?*"

"None. None at all. England expects that every man will do his duty."

Mr. Ingleside promised Ann to return early the next afternoon, which was as fine as they had hoped.

"I have at last," he said, when lunch was over, "I have at last found a compensation for being a Government clerk."

"Oh, father," said Ann, "there are lots of compensations. There's the note-paper, for one."

"This is the first real one," said her father. "Note-paper is all very well, but it incites one to use the pen. The compensation to which I refer incites one to lay the pen down."

"Do tell me," said Ann.

"Come and see," said Mr. Ingleside: "it's Richard Oast's present — close by. Bring one of our half-bottles of champagne with you."

He led the way to Villiers Street, through the Underground station, across the Embankment, to the Charing Cross pier; Ann accompanying in a

kind of stupor, grasping a bottle. They descended the sloping gangway to the pier itself, which was deserted save for Mr. Richard Oast, M.P., sitting on a barrel, and a young man in a motor-boat moored to the side, who smoked a cigarette and polished a gun-metal fitting. Ann noticed that the motor-boat was quite new and very smart; but she was still a little dazed by the whole proceeding, complicated by the unashamed champagne. Oast came to meet them.

"Punctual," he said; "which is a lesson to me. I can't forget that this boat ought to have been here yesterday. Are you excited, Ann?"

"Excited!" said Ann. "Of course I am, but father won't explain. Look at this absurd bottle."

"Absurd!" said Oast. "I like that! Why, that is the crown of most of my work."

"Champagne?" Ann exclaimed.

Mr. Oast laughed. "Wait," he said.

"But where is the present?" Ann asked.

"There," said Mr. Ingleside.

"Where?" said Ann.

"The latest toy and recreation," said Mr. Ingleside, pointing to the boat. "It's ours, Ann; Mr. Oast has built it for us, and that's Mr. Timbs, the engineer. I have permission from a nepotic colleague to keep it here. We are going a voyage in it every afternoon after I leave the office, and now and then we will lunch on board. It is to give us fresh air, and make us healthy, and show us the mystery of ships; for we shall of course always go down the river, and not up. We are going

for a spin to the Pool now — after you have christened her."

"The champagne?" said Ann.

"Of course," said her father. "You didn't suppose we were going to drink it. No need for champagne when you have a motor-boat to whisk you about this beautiful river."

"What do I do?" Ann asked.

"You ought to smash it over the prow," said Mr. Ingleside, "but that's very dangerous. Timbs here will knock the neck off."

Timbs dexterously did so and handed back the foaming remnant.

"Now," said Mr. Ingleside, "give it a name."

"Tell me," said Ann to Richard Oast.

"What do you think of the *Ann and Alison?*" he asked. "Lots of ships are named like that."

"It would be so awfully personal."

"Then the *Respite?*"

"Not quite right," Ann thought. "What do you say, father?"

Mr. Ingleside affected to think. "The *Caprice,*" he said at last.

"Oh yes," said Ann, and she poured out the champagne and solemnly named the boat the *Caprice.*

"Get that painted on it," said Mr. Oast to the engineer.

"It's a good name," said Mr. Ingleside, "because it not only describes the unusual nature of our adventure, but it will excuse the boat when she rams a tug or a barge or the Tower Bridge, as she is certain to do before long. And now for our first

voyage. In a month I confidently expect to find results in health at least equal to the same time in Switzerland, without having met a single waiter."

The *Caprice* fulfilled all expectations. On the muggiest, dullest day, when there is no air at all in the London streets, a breeze holds in the middle of the river, and a motor-boat meeting this can easily increase it to a gale. Mr. Ingleside grew visibly stronger and more alert, and Ann was an understudy to Hygeia. On the sea Mr. Ingleside did not hold with motor-boats at all; they were (like steamers) contrary, he said, to Nature: Nature did not desire anyone to go faster than herself. But in the Thames he approved of them: life is as a whole so artificial and forced in London that one is entitled to resort to artificial means to alleviate it.

"Why you go to the trouble of all that explanation, I can't understand," said Richard Oast, "except for the luxury of pampering your conscience."

"No other reason," said Mr. Ingleside.

Mr. Ingleside could not have had a more satisfying present than the *Caprice*. It gave him not only health and recreation; it gave him (so to speak) a stake in his beloved stream: he became a freeman of the Thames. He now had as much right there as any bargee; any tug-captain sardonic and steadfast at the wheel; any inscrutable and authoritative river policeman. He could now, in conversation with them, say "we," "our river," "our Thames."

The *Caprice's* usual trip was to Greenwich and back, and you may do this a hundred times a day

and find it different every time — different craft are met and passed; different chaff thrown from the bargees; and, best of all, a different light illumines the sails and spars, the bridges and the wharves, the Tower and St. Paul's. In the later evening the *Caprice* sometimes went up to Chelsea, amid Whistler's blue mists.

Timbs, the engineer, was a cheerful, talkative fellow who had been in the Royal Navy. He took the boat home to Twickenham every evening and brought her back to Charing Cross pier every noon, ready for the after-lunch cruise. When he bared his arms, it was, as Ann said, like a picture gallery, so many tattooed devices were there; and he had others which Ann had not seen, and would not see, Richard Oast told her — including a ship in full sail on his chest, and a snake all the way up his spine fascinating a bird of paradise between his shoulders.

"Didn't it hurt?" Ann once asked him.

"Hurt!" he said. "I give you my word. When this was done my arm was as big as a mast."

"You've only got anchors and things," said Ann. "You haven't got any names. Some sailors have names on their arms."

Timbs smiled a sardonic smile. "Yes," he said, "and don't some of them wish they hadn't? Not half."

"Why?" asked Ann, who was incorrigibly innocent.

"Why, Miss? Well, I hardly like to tell you."

"Go on," said Ann.

"Well," said Timbs, "suppose you was walking

out with a girl named Polly, for example, and you told her she was the only girl you was ever soft on, and one day she catches sight of the name of Fan just under your elbow, what then?"

"I see," said Ann.

"I've known fellows," said Timbs, "who've gone to enormous expense and horrible pain to have 'Eliza,' say, tattoed right over 'Maria,' so as to blot 'Maria' clean out, with a lover's knot all round it, too, and then blowed if they haven't got sick of Eliza in a week! No, Miss; no wise man has girls' names tattooed on him."

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH A WIDOWER ACCEPTS HIS LOT WITH FORTITUDE AND DISMAY

IT was on their return from a voyage in the *Caprice* a few days after the birthday that Mr. Ingleside found a telegram in his rooms. He read it and stood by the window still and silent for some moments, while Ann waited.

Then he crushed the telegram in his hand. "Ann," he said, "your mother died yesterday in Japan. Alison is returning at once. . . ."

Ann bore the news of her mother's death as tranquilly as one can at seventeen, when one has never been demonstratively loved. What it chiefly meant to her was the return of Alison, to which she looked forward with pleasure. There are so many things in London that two contemporaries can do which are unamusing for one, and Ann at present knew no one of her own age except John, and John did not find her quite so amenable as he wished. She came midway between the unattainable but adorable goddess which a young man likes to be a slave to and the slave that a young man likes to be adored by; and John was of the age that cannot bear compromise. Besides, Ann told home truths, which no wise woman ever does. In a few years

she would know better. John therefore was not the companion that Mrs. Campion had foretold, and the progress of the collection of picture post-cards of pretty actresses and dancers on the walls of his room had not been arrested.

Mr. Ingleside said very little about the bereavement; but his thoughts were busy, and he looked careworn. Although he had accepted the estrangement, he had never desired it. "Love comes unseen," says the poet: "we only see it go." Mr. Ingleside had seen it go, and the spectacle had filled him with hopelessness and had fortified his natural pessimism. His one steady wish was that constancy might be universal; stories of faithlessness hurt him far more than tales of starvation and crime. The failure of this ideal in his own experience made no difference to his feelings concerning it.

"For," as he would say, "no amount of thought can either make one love a woman if one does not, or keep one in love if one has lost that emotion. One can be solicitous, thoughtful, kind, watchful, tender, protective, admiring, sorry; but if love has gone, love has gone."

And again: "A bachelor may be lonely and even miserable for a great part of his time: but at any rate he has broken no promises; he has not stood at the graveside of rapture."

Mr. Ingleside did not blame himself for the fiasco of his own marriage; nor did he pity himself: he merely regretted that such things were possible. He remembered only too vividly the happy days before the rift, the coolness.

Mrs. Ingleside had not been a very clever woman with men. She had not the instinct of management. But it did not occur to her husband to fix the blame on that. He had loved her, she had loved him; he had made her promises, she had made him promises; and all had gone. His quarrel with the powers that be was, as I say, that such things were possible.

How his wife had felt about it he did not know. She had seemed contented enough, with her Italian studies, and her novels, and her friends; but was she?

She had written nothing of it in her letters. Would Alison bring him one — her last words? He wondered much.

Mr. Ingleside went down to Bournemouth to arrange about the house and furniture. It was a melancholy task, especially when it came to the books and papers. There were so many books that he had given her, that they had read together. The inscriptions cut him to the heart. And yet — again — he did not blame himself. He blamed fate and fate alone: the gods, the stars, whatever it is one blames.

Her desk was a terrible ordeal. She had kept everything. All his love-letters were there, tied together. He untied the ribbon. . . . Had she re-read them, he wondered, or was it merely habit to keep them — an unexamined sentiment? But there they were, hot from his pen. . . . He glanced at one, but got no farther.

Mr. Ingleside arranged for a sale of the furniture

and the removal of the more intimate articles to Buckingham Street, and returned to London in a mood of perplexed melancholy. He seemed unable to close his grasp on anything. Always a pessimist, to-day had underscored his hopelessness.

It was his second loss, although the actual severance had of course come years before; but it is impossible to discount death. Naturally to that other loss his thoughts now turned more than ever. He leaned over the embankment and watched the river until the dawn was grey, and it was of Askill that he was thinking. Where was Askill? he had often wondered; but to-night the question burned into his brain with new persistency. Askill and he had been at school together, and afterwards at college; both had settled in London. Mr. Ingleside had a warm affection for his present friends, particularly Dr. Staminer, Thrace, and Richard Oast; but they did not compare with Askill: they did not understand as he had done. One friend must always stand first, and Askill was he.

Askill had been at the Bar. It was an odd choice for that type of man — who had much that was adventurous, so much that was even anarchistic, and so much that was truthful, among his elements; but his father, whom he greatly revered, had wished it, and he had allowed circumstances to control him. He succeeded; his genius gradually brought him fame and prosperity. Mr. Ingleside alone knew how little he valued them, how powerful all the time, but steadily more powerful as he grew older and time grew shorter, was the call of the wild.

Civilization irked him; success shamed him. As he had grown older his impatience had increased, until the day came when the papers stated that he had been offered a law lordship. That night he disappeared. At the very moment when everything that most persons would think most desirable was at his feet he vanished from the haunts of men.

The theory is that to his odd mind, with its passionate fear, and more than fear, abhorrence, of growing old, of settling down, of fossilizing, of ceasing to notice — this offer of security and wealth and a position of honour wore something of the same sinister air that of old in a society where primitive hatreds flourished a warning written in blood might have had. It was indeed a warning — the ultimatum of the world to its old enemy, the last threatening word in their long quarrel. Reduced to the simplest terms, it said: "I offer you an honourable death. This is the end — eat, drink, and be merry, for your youth is over, and in thirty years at most (which are really thirty seconds) you will die. Here is a gold-mounted ladder by which you may reach the velvet-lined top shelf. Up with you, and turn to contented stone. Call no man dead till he is comfortable."

That was six years ago, and he had never been heard of since.

Such was Askill's story. And now he was — where? Mr. Ingleside left the river and climbed the stairs of his famous old house. "And so to bed," he quoted from his illustrious predecessor with a smile; but his heart was very heavy. He belonged to the older generation, and there were none left.

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH IT SEEMS THAT OLD LADIES TOO CAN BE NAPOLEONIC

ANN had no sooner reached Miss Beautiman's than she was told to jump into a cab and drive at once to Green's Hotel in Bruton Street and ask for Miss Larpent, who needed a temporary secretary. Ann did so, and was led into a darkened bedroom, in which after a while she discerned a venerable lady in bed.

"Sit down at the table there," said the old lady, "and I'll dictate to you. Don't think I'm an invalid, because I'm not. I've merely caught a chill in this horrible city. The letters, which I want you to take back and type for me, are to my servants, who were expecting me back, and who don't know what to do without instructions. They are good creatures, but so stupid when they are not directed. We'll begin with the cook. Are you ready? Then begin: —

"'DEAR TANNER, — I am sorry to have upset your plans as I must have done on Tuesday, but I have contracted a chill which is keeping me indoors for a few days. I expect to return on Monday, and should like a leg of mutton roast with plain boiled potatoes and French beans. A baked custard to follow. Everything is to be as plain as possible,

to get the taste of hotel-cooking out of my mouth. For Tuesday you had better order a breast of lamb; but I will write again about this. — I am, yours faithfully,

'ANTOINETTE LARPENT.'

"Tanner is a good woman," said Miss Larpent, "but very limited in range. She has no ideas beyond beef and mutton. But then what cook has? At any rate, she makes beef and mutton taste like beef and mutton, which the people here can't. Now the coachman —

"'DEAR RIGBY, — I was sorry to disappoint you and James and the horses by not arriving yesterday as I intended, but I have contracted a chill in these draughty streets, and shall be kept indoors for, I fear, a few days. I should like you to drive out Miss Pearce on Thursday afternoon, Mrs. Ferris on Friday, and the Misses Keen on Saturday. You will be interested to hear that in London motor-cabs and other petrol-driven vehicles are on the increase, so that the sad spectacle of fallen horses is less common than of old. I have been in a motor-cab, and indeed think it was very likely the speed of it that gave me my chill; but nothing can reconcile me to the use of these abominable things in the country. — Yours faithfully,

'ANTOINETTE LARPENT.'

"What I should like to add," said Miss Larpent, "is that I hope he'll look cheerful when he drives those people out, and refuse their tips (which they can't in the least afford); but it's no good saying things like that to servants. Now to the gardener —

"'DEAR MUGGERIDGE, — I am sorry not to have paid my morning visit on Wednesday as you must have expected, but I have been detained in London by a chill and shall probably not see you again till Tuesday. I hope everything

is going on well and that Thomas is not idling. As we came down the drive last week on our way to the station I noticed a piece of groundsel which was very near seeding. I hope that you have by this time destroyed it. As nearly as I can recollect, it was opposite the fifth or sixth Scotch fir from the house, on the left. Unless destroyed before it seeds, it will spread seriously. If you have any really nice peaches, you might send me a basket to Green's Hotel, Bruton Street, W. I should like some flowers and fruit to go to Miss Pearce, the Misses Keen, and Mrs. Ferris. — I am, yours faithfully,

'ANTOINETTE LARPENT.'

"Now to the parlour maid. She's a very good girl, although she does send far too many things to the wash (but they all do that) and never knows whether a picture is hanging straight or not —

"'DEAR TRIMMER, — I am sorry to have upset your preparations by not returning on Tuesday, but I have caught a chill in London and am confined to my room for a while. I hope to return on Monday, and shall be glad to be at home again. I shall probably go straight to bed, so please have a fire in the room and some yellow roses. It might be a good opportunity now to turn out both the Rose Room and the Green Room, and I have been thinking that it is a long time since we looked at my furs, so perhaps they had better come out and be well examined for moths. — I am, yours faithfully, ANTOINETTE LARPENT.'

"Now to the butler —

"'DEAR ROSSITER, — I was sorry to have to break my word and not return on Tuesday as promised, but I have contracted a chill in London, and must stay here, I am afraid, till Monday next. Be sure to keep a careful record of anyone that calls, and inform them that I am not really ill, but my medical man tells me I must be a little careful. As he has ordered some dry champagne at eleven o'clock every morn-

ing, I am having some cases of quarter-bottles sent down, so you will know what to expect. Lying awake last night, I wondered if it might not be too heating food which has caused Caro's eczema, and I think it would be well to try some experiments. Will you therefore see that he has no actual meat for these few days, but Tanner might prepare a strengthening gravy in which to soak his bread and vegetables. — I am, yours faithfully, ANTOINETTE LARPENT.'

"There," said Miss Larpent, "I think that is all. Oh no," she added, "there's one more. To my nephew, an officer on an O. & P. boat, who has been getting very soft on one of the passengers —

"'MY DEAR BRYAN, — You must excuse this letter not being in my own hand, but I happen at the moment to be ill in bed, and I am dictating it to an amanuensis.'

— "Can you spell 'amanuensis,' my dear?" asked Miss Larpent. "If not, put 'secretary,' because I'm sure I can't. —

"'Your news is interesting and not unexpected. One always looks for letters of this kind from sailors, who if they had no more control over ships than over their hearts would all be at the bottom of the sea. You say you would much rather now live on shore. I do not intend to make any kind of proposition until I see the girl. If I don't like her, I shall not care whether you leave the sea or not. If I like her, I may do something for you. I may tell you this at any rate, that I like her name: that is, as much of it as you tell me. I find it difficult lying here in an expensive and not well-managed hotel to believe that any girl named Alison can be other than nice and gentle; but nowadays there's no knowing. I trust you will come down to Cray Wood at the earliest moment after reaching port, and that you won't propose for at least six weeks. — Your affectionate aunt,

'ANTOINETTE LARPENT.'

"Now," said the old lady, "get back to your office and type those, and then I will sign them.

"Tell me about yourself," said the old lady, after Ann had returned and the letters were dispatched, "for of course you were not brought up to be a typist."

Ann told her.

"I wonder," said the old lady, "if you could get a day or two off from your work and help me with my shopping. I intend, whatever the doctors say, to get up for lunch on Friday and shop afterwards and shop again on Saturday morning. Then I shall go to bed again and rest till Monday, when I go home. Do you think you could give me Friday afternoon and Saturday morning?"

Ann said she would; and on Friday she presented herself at one o'clock to lunch with the old lady and begin her duties.

They did the ordinary kind of shopping first, in a little coupé ("No more taxis for me," said Miss Larpent), and then she told the man to drive to a street off the Brompton Road.

"This is an old curiosity shop, my dear," she said, "kept by a great friend of mine whom I always visit when I come to town — Miss Ming."

"Miss Ming," said Ann, "why, I know Miss Ming! Father often gets little things from her. I shall be very glad to see her again."

"My gracious!" Miss Ming exclaimed. "Miss Larpent! How are you? I am pleased to see you. And Miss Ingleside too! I never knew that you knew each other. Why, Miss Larpent, I was thinking of you only yesterday; in fact, I nearly

wrote. I've just got a collection of comfit boxes in Chelsea enamel — perfect darlings every one of them — I never saw better. 'They're the very thing for Miss Larpent,' I said directly I saw them. The dears!"

"No, no," said Miss Larpent. "I'm too old to be caught like that."

"It's gospel, I assure you," Miss Ming protested. "But look at them."

"They're very attractive," said Miss Larpent, "but how can I buy enamel when I've got a nephew who wants to marry and hasn't a penny to bless himself with?"

"The poor young fellow," said Miss Ming. "I'd much rather he was made happy than that you should buy anything of me."

"Well," cried Miss Larpent, "if the millennium hasn't arrived!"

"I mean it," said Miss Ming stoutly. "I'd like all the young people to be happily married, bless their hearts. But here's a pretty thing I put on one side for you the other day," and opening a drawer Miss Ming extracted a tissue-paper parcel containing a sampler. "There," she said, "'Gertrude Jane Larpent, aged eleven.' Is that one of your ancestors, do you think?"

"Do I think!" exclaimed Miss Larpent. "It's my own great-grandfather's sister. Where did you get it?"

Miss Ming explained that it came in with several others. "I always look at the names," she continued, "they're so old-fashioned and quaint. I

like to think of the little mites sitting down to them in their funny little high waists and pushing their needles in and out so patiently. The pets! And to think we should be framing their samplers to-day and hanging them up like pictures. Who'd have thought it? But there's precious little done by the children of this day that anyone will want in a hundred years' time. Has it ever struck you," Miss Ming inquired, "that in a hundred years' time it will be just the same things that I am selling now that the old curiosity shops will have? It won't be anything that is being made now. Isn't that a pity?

"Now here's a little darling," she said, taking up a bead purse. "Doesn't that tempt you? Or this?" holding a blue bowl to the light. "Isn't that sweet?" And so she rambled on, displaying and fondling one treasure after another.

The old lady bought several things, including a set of ivory lace bobbins with a lover's message on each, and a little disc of silk with "My True Heart" embroidered on it that a girl dead these hundred years had given her lover, dead too, to wear inside his watch.

"But what I really want," she said, "is one of those little weather houses with an old man and an old woman in it that we used to see in the cottages. I want to give it to a great-nephew."

Miss Ming was nonplussed. She had no notion where to get one.

"Fancy Miss Ming not knowing!" exclaimed Miss Larpent. "I made sure you could tell me."

"I think I can find out," said Ann, thinking of Leslie's curious gift of omniscience in all such matters; and sure enough she was right.

"Those little weather houses?" said Leslie. "You've come to the very man. You have to go to Houndsditch for them. On the right side from Bishopsgate, a little way along, there's a large toy shop with a Scotch name. That's the place. They're made in Germany nowadays, but they're none the worse for that. Sixpence halfpenny each."

"How clever you are!" said Ann.

"Only so long as you ask me questions I can answer," said Leslie.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN WHICH ALISON RETURNS FROM THE EAST

THE *Caprice* played a great part in the return of Alison, for Mr. Ingleside and Ann went down to Tilbury in it to bring her back. Ann felt like a modern Queen Elizabeth on her way to review the forces.

Alison, who had learned by letter that she was to be carried back to London by water, was looking over the taffrail. Ann saw her while they were still a long way off and waved her handkerchief. Alison waved in reply. A young man in uniform was standing beside her, and they saw him soon after move away.

Ann remained with Timbs in the boat and Mr. Ingleside boarded the vessel.

Alison sprang to meet him and hid her face on his shoulder. He saw at once that she was older. She had always been an emotional girl, quite different from Ann, who took life as it came: her recent experiences had not reduced that characteristic, but had made her graver.

Alison kept him waiting while she said good-bye to a number of the passengers and the young

officer, and then Mr. Ingleside took her to the *Caprice* and left her with Ann while Timbs and he arranged for the dispatch of the trunks to London.

Alison was no sooner alone with Ann than she broke down. She had been through a very trying period, and was glad to have her father's company, even though he gave nothing away, and even more glad to have Ann's strong young arms round her neck. She sat in the boat with Ann holding her and crying a little, silently, for quite a long time.

Then they started. It was late afternoon, in perfect weather. They tore swifty up the golden stream, often into the very eye of the sun, towards the beautiful cloud of mist that was London. Under the influence of the strange scene and the excitement of this unwonted means of returning home, and warmed by the presence of those whom she loved and who loved her, Alison grew happier. Her natural vivacity began to return, and when they reached Charing Cross she was talking gaily.

She set her feet firmly one before the other as they walked from the pier to Buckingham Street, with that pleasure in the old earth which one knows to the full only after a long voyage or a very bad crossing. It was delightful to be so near home: Ann had pointed out the windows while they were still on the *Caprice;* delightful to return under such untoward and charming conditions. Her father might not be very demonstrative; he might be more wrapped up in himself than many girls' fathers were; but he did have the most attractive ideas. Who else in this world would meet his daughter at

Tilbury in a motor-boat and bring her home to Charing Cross in it?

And here was London, with its crowds of human beings, and its shop windows, its piers, its tall men, its concerts and theatres, its tea-rooms and chocolate, its circulating libraries, and almost above all its reputation for fascinating fogs.

So Alison's thoughts ran as she stamped almost like a German soldier from Charing Cross pier to Buckingham Street.

Everything about her father's abode pleased her, and her own room, on which Ann had spent much thought and care, gave her a new thrill of satisfaction. How homely it seemed, after her cabin on the ship and after the hotels she had stayed in since she left England on that sad expedition. A room without a mosquito net — how adorable! A floor that did not move up and down — how extraordinarily comfortable! And in addition to all this, a secret. No wonder Alison was happier.

The anxiety which Mrs. Boody had felt when Ann returned to her father's roof was renewed when Alison appeared. Here was a more serious danger: a daughter really grown up.

"You'll be wanting to take the housekeeping into your own hands, won't you, Miss?" she said.

"Why?" was Alison's disconcerting if satisfactory reply.

"Oh, well, Miss, young ladies like to manage for their pas," said Mrs. Boody. "And it's practice too," she added.

"I'll watch you, I think," Alison said. "I'm

sure you do it splendidly, and you've done it so long. Unless, of course, you want to give it up . . .?"

"There are times, Miss," said Mrs. Boody, "when I've lost heart; when your pa's had no appetite whatever; but I came to him to be his housekeeper, and his housekeeper I'm prepared to be to the end. But, of course, blood has claims before — before employees. That I'm well aware of. And that's why I spoke as I did."

"Please go on, Mrs. Boody," said Alison. "We had the nicest dinner last evening I have had for months."

"I'm glad to hear it, Miss, very glad," said Mrs. Boody. "And a change too, I'm sure, after having everything boiled in sea-water, as I suppose you've been doing. Couldn't you tell me now of any little thing you particularly fancied, and I would get it for you? Miss Ann, now, your sister, she dotes on sausages for breakfast. Is there anything you prefer to anything else?"

"No," said Alison, "so long as it's all English."

For a few days Mr. Ingleside's life was entirely changed, Alison dragged him so determinedly forth to explore London. These excursions had filled her mind ever since the vessel left Japan; and now was the opportunity. An interesting Englishman who was travelling from Japan to China added fuel to the flame by the enthusiasm with which he too had recalled London and desired to return; but not for three years would he be free to get there.

The Café Royal was the centre of his paradise:

once again to stroll in at five o'clock, when the place was filling up and the dominoes beginning to rattle, and watch through his cigar smoke the strange cosmopolitan crowd. To do that in the afternoon; in the evening to drift into a theatre or music hall, and for supper a grilled bone. Simple tastes; but how far from the grasp in Hong Kong!

"It's quite on the cards," he said, "that I should want to be back here again before very long; but until I did! . . . The awful thing about London," he added, "is that when I am there I can't leave it. I disregard family ties; I break engagements. My people, who live in the country, want to see me, and I make excuses. I even get to the station and — return to my hotel; or I go down one day and invent a pretext to hurry back on the next.

"How I envy you, Miss Ingleside! And in a way you are luckier than I, for you know London so little, and therefore one of the hard things won't affect you: I mean the loss of landmarks. Every time I go back there are new streets, changed streets, old houses rebuilt, old theatres (this is the worst) rebuilt. I can't bear that."

Without such talk Alison would still have wanted her London banquet, but this wistful exile increased her longing; and Mr. Ingleside was dazed by the intensity of their sight-seeing. At last, after being led in one hour into five city churches, he gave it up.

"No," he said, "no more. I am a Londoner, and Londoners don't do these things. We are the happier for knowing that near at hand are museums and churches, but we don't enter them. A picture

gallery now and then, yes; a concert; even a play. But no more Wren interiors. My idea of Wren is an inspired deviser of white stone spires on which the afternoon light falls very beautifully and the soot accumulates with perfect discretion. No more. Never ask me to go inside a Wren church again. The Abbey, yes; but no more aldermanic dormitories. No, if you must rush about London, get John Campion. He's got nothing to do, or if he has, he will with punctuality and dispatch cease to do it."

Mr. Ingleside was right.

"Of course, if Miss Ingleside wants me, I must go," John said to his mother. "After all, she's just had a bereavement, and people should be kind to her. It's a great nuisance to give up this afternoon's engineering work, but I will do it."

John therefore returned home to lunch, changed into his best Bond street suit and green socks with silver clocks, and was at Buckingham Street at three. By four o'clock he had decided that Alison was worth cultivating.

"A very sensible girl," he told his mother. "Not a bit like Ann, always trying to score off you. The kind of girl I like: a good listener."

CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH ALISON HAS NO CHANCE TO RELATE THE STORY OF HER TRAVELS

ALISON'S return pleased every one; but after her own family Henry Thrace and Vycount Ramer were perhaps made the happiest by it. She had always been their darling, and they vied with each other in attentions. Surely we want a word to describe these courtesies of affection, as distinguished from love. Neither had the faintest thought of marriage; but their homage and assiduity would have disgraced many a professed Romeo. Nor had they any jealousy. If Henry Thrace brought roses, only to find Ramer's roses — and more beautiful ones — on the table, he did not glower, but laughed at his ill-luck; if Ramer brought Lindt chocolate, and found that Henry had stolen a march on him with Marquis, he laughed too.

Whether or not either of these gentle bachelors had ever had an *affaire* no one knew for certain; but among those with whom the wish is father to the thought (and London drawing-rooms are full of them) they were each credited with an old romance. Many a woman would still be glad to take Ramer in hand and see that a clothes-brush and he sometimes met, and even organize the business side of his life, now hopelessly in disarray; but Thrace, they

felt, was single beyond redemption, and one knew instinctively that no woman living could make even the minutest addition to his dressing-table.

With Ann they were both facetious; chaff was the staple diet. But with Alison they were solicitous and gravely humorous. That was the difference.

If Alison caused any heart in this little sodality to beat the faster, it was Christie's; but Christie was not a commanding personality. He fell midway between a woman's needs: not strong enough to control nor weak enough to need protection; he was just that dull thing, an ordinarily capable person. Also he was so busy with his journalism and general acquisitiveness as to give the impression of being self-sufficing. Such men do not win women: they acquire them in the day's work, so to speak. But the noble sport of winning women has gone out, anyway.

Christie, however, so far leaned towards Alison as to interrupt his ordinary routine of old book and old print and old water-colour hunting, to take her to a *matinée* now and then, with tickets that cost him nothing, and even to wonder to what extent marriage would interfere with his well-ordered life.

Between the three Alison had a delightful time, especially as Dr. Staminer's courtly kindness was always at her call too, and Leslie's quick sympathy, and the tender raillery of her father.

Old Mrs. Ingleside was also glad to see Alison again, for Alison was her first and for some time her only grandchild, and she had been very proud of her. "Well, my dear," she said, "to think of your having

been all that distance! Why, I'm nearly sixty years older than you, and the farthest from home I ever went was Florence. Firenze, as they call it there. That's one of the oddest things — isn't it? — that great and important cities should have different names in different countries. Just think, London is Londres in French; and Paris is Paris here, Parry in French, and Parigi in Italian. The funny thing is that it's only the big places that have so many names: the little ones are the same everywhere. Hove, for example — not that Hove is little — Hove, for example, is Hove everywhere.

"And your mother. Oh, my dear, how sad! To die out there in that foreign land, where I'm told the houses are made of paper. How dreadful to die so far from home comforts, and all among idolaters too! It's not dying properly, is it? And what a trial for you, my dear. And mourning, too! So far as I have observed — and there's an excellent Japanese bazaar in the Western Road — the Japanese have only the very gayest colours, not in the least suitable for funerals.

"But after all, I sometimes wonder whether black is as important as we were brought up to think. I remember hearing the American preacher Ward Beecher say that we ought to wear white and be joyful when another of our friends entered paradise; but that takes no account of a personal bereavement, does it, my dear? Very nice in the pulpit, when every one's well and excited, no doubt. But of course mourning can be overdone. I remember the stuffiness of two widows in a railway carriage in

France, when I was there with your grandfather. So much *crêpe* that it seemed to sop up the air like a sponge.

"I hope you found some nice people in Japan to give you help, and an English doctor. I always felt that the long voyage was a mistake, but I didn't think it would end like this. A little yellow people, are they not? Very ingenious and quick; but not a nice nation to die among. I have a set of ivory chess-men from Japan — most wonderful. And those balls within balls — as extraordinary as a freak of nature. Well, well, and so your poor mother lies there! I pictured many things for her in my time, but never a Japanese cemetery. Well, well. Such little men, too, for bearers! I wonder they could manage it. But perhaps some of the English sailors helped. You must tell me about it all some day. Not now — it is too recent.

"I'm glad to see you looking so bonny, my dear. And your dear father, how is he? And dear Ann? I haven't seen your dear father for a fortnight at least, but he writes every day. Such a clear hand, my dear; so different from your mother's. I never could be quite sure of what she said. That dreadful day when I waited for her for so long at Redmayne's, and it seems she wrote Debenham's. Not at all alike, are they? but really such difficult sideways stuff. As I told her more than once, it would have been perfectly right if she'd only added Freebody's; but she was so refined she could never bring herself to say it, much less write it in cold blood. Well, well, poor dear.

"And dear Ann. I'm so sorry to find that, in spite of all I said, she goes on with her typewriting. That's not work for a lady. I very much object to the activity of the young girls to-day. There's not one that knows how to sit in a chair and keep her hands still, as I was taught to do. They're always bustling. And the interest they take, or pretend to take, in everything! Games, theatres, concerts, books, photography, cycling. Even motoring. I assure you I have more than once seen women driving motor-cars on the Front. So bold and daring. And men sitting beside them laughing and talking as if it were quite safe. Most extraordinary!

"I hope Ann does not drive this new motor-boat which that Socialist friend of his gave to your dear father. A nice present for a Government official! I'm always so afraid that the chiefs of the Department will get to hear of this unfortunate intimacy and ask your father to leave. Bombs, you know, my dear. He tells me in a letter that it can go twenty knots an hour, which is terrific, Miss Airey informs me. Her uncle is a captain, you know, and she understands knots. Don't let dear Ann take the tiller, or whatever it is, will you, my dear? That is, if you have any influence over her. And don't you go in for sport and politics and manly things. But I don't think you will. You look much more old-fashioned than dear Ann. I hope you are. Ann is so independent. I like girls to wait till they're spoken to and to blush a little now and then.

"Now tell me all about your travels. India must

be glorious, but bad for the liver, I understand. Such yellow faces those Anglo-Indians bring back. There are several of them here in Hove, where one can be reserved and refined on so little. That wonderful tower at Delhi — but I suppose you did not get there — I'm never sure how to pronounce it; T A J it's spelt. Tarj, I suppose. But you didn't see that. And Simla — we had friends at Simla for years, the Witheringtons. The tallest woman I ever knew, but quite nice."

So the old lady ran on, and Alison did her best to keep her attention on the words; but if she nodded now and again as the landau swayed and jolted, who shall blame her? Even Chinese grandchildren must be frail at times.

CHAPTER XXV

IN WHICH GARRULOUS SYMPATHY IS BROUGHT FROM THE SEVEN SISTERS ROAD

"PLEASE, Miss," said Mrs. Boody, "there's a lady to see you named Wyborn."

"Wyborn," said Mr. Ingleside. "That's not a name: it's a problem."

"Wyborn," said Mrs. Boody. "She says she was once the young ladies' nurse."

"Why, its Sarah!" cried Alison. "I'll go and bring her up."

"Her name used to be Fletcher," said Mr. Ingleside. "I remember a visit from her father, who thought that as I was an obscure clerk in a Government Office, I could get his uncle a post as keeper of the Town Council Park at Bury St. Edmunds."

Alison dragged Sarah into the room.

"Good morning, sir," she said. "Good morning, Miss Ann. Hearing that your ma had passed away, I thought I would call and say how sorry I was. Wyborn too. Not that he knew her, but I've told him so much about you all that he feels it deeply."

"And so you're married?" said Mr. Ingleside as he rose to go.

"Yes, sir, three years ago. We have a small shop where we sell newspapers, tobacco, and sweets. And picture post-cards. Frederick Wyborn's his name. 23 Pilgrim Lane, just off the Seven Sisters Road."

"It's a little too far away for him to supply me," said Mr. Ingleside. "But if ever I'm in that part of the world ——" And so saying he went off to what Christie called his "alleged duties."

Mrs. Wyborn took a chair and settled down to a good talk, which was largely reminiscence of the girls' childhood. But she came in time to herself and her own affairs. Wyborn was much younger than she. She had met him, she said, at a friend's wedding. He was only a grocer's clerk then, but full of clever ideas. It was he who arranged with an Italian piano-organist to play outside the wedding party's house for the whole evening for seven and six — so that there could be dancing and no one could say they didn't have music. She had married him, said Sarah, because she knew he was clever and would go ahead. They had bought the business with her savings. There was a pamphlet about it called *How to become a Tobacconist on £20*, and they had read that first. They read it in the Park on Sundays. The tobacconist's, sweet-seller's, and newsagent's were three of the businesses that required no experience whatever. Insurance agency was another, and Wyborn hoped to add that soon.

"I hope you're not sufferingettes, dearies," said Sarah, with concern. "But knowing how odd your pa was, I was half afraid. Wyborn says they

ought to be pole-axed. I don't go as far as that, but I do call it dreadful, the way they go on. I read about it in the papers while I'm waiting for customers. It's a most litery life for me. You've no idea how many serials I keep going at once; although now and then I have to sell the last copy before I've come to the end of the instalment. That's a great blow."

Alison asked how Sarah had heard of their bereavement.

"Well, Miss," said Sarah, "I had it from Eliza, who used to be the cook at Bournemouth, you remember. Eliza's mistress saw it in the *Times*. I don't see the *Times* myself. We're not often asked for that. Threepence is a lot of money in our part. We don't do much with the pennies either, except the *Telegraph*, and the *Morning Post* on servants' days. No, our line's the ha'pennies, morning and evening. But the real profit comes from the weeklies — the *Forget-me-nots* and *Home Notes* for the women, and the *Lloyds'* and *Reynolds's*, what can be read in bed by the men of a Sunday morning. That's what we do best with. Isn't it funny, dearies, to think of your old Sarah distributing reading like this?"

"Have you any babies?" Alison asked.

Sarah's face fell. "No, deary, I haven't, and that's my cross. It's that that gives me time to read so much. It makes me miserable often to think that here I am for the first time in my life in the midst of unlimited goodies, and no one of my own to give them to. Not that I should let the little

precious have too many of them. Oh dear, no! Bad for his little teeth. But a few, now and then, just for a treat, wouldn't hurt him, and might keep him quiet when disposed to be fractious. But there, what's the use of talking, when there's no little precious to talk about?"

"Poor Sarah!" said Alison.

"Well, deary, sometimes, you know," said Sarah, "I think perhaps it's a mercy, when I read the papers and see the dreadful things people are up to. He might grow up into a bad character, you know, and how awful that would be! The shocking murders! The Hatton Garden burglaries! — suppose he were to do any of them? Or suppose he was to become one of those anarchists and throw a bomb at the King, God bless him! No, it's getting to be such a terrible place that I'm often relieved to think he's never been born."

"But why," Ann asked, "are you so sure he would be a boy?"

"Lor' bless you, deary," said Sarah, "I never think of him as a girl.

"I have sole charge of the sweets," she continued a little later. "Wyborn says I shall ruin him because I will give the children overweight; but I tell him that the way he pinches the tobacco to the half-ounce will make that all right. Oh, he's clever! And work! He never leaves the shop. There he sits all day long, smoking his pipe and talking to customers about the races, and the Government, and the sufferingettes, and the murders. We do well out of murders. By-elections are all right, but

they're not in it with murders. I always pray that the murderers won't be caught for a week at least, because it works up the excitement so. By-elections of course are all over in one edition, like the Derby; but we're very glad when an M.P. dies, all the same."

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WHICH WE FIND A MODERN ULYSSES AND A MODERN PENELOPE

THE following Friday evening was a special one, in honour of Alison's return — the guests arriving for dinner instead of after it. To meet the situation, a cook had been engaged to assist in the kitchen and a butler ordered from the Stores. Mr. Ingleside wanted Timbs to serve in that capacity; but his daughters were against it for the reasons (1) that he was engaged as a chauffeur only; (2) that he was an engineer, and therefore a superior person; (3) that he would do it badly; and (4), which alone would have carried the day, that he was a darling, and they did not want him to: it would hurt his feelings. (How do chauffeurs acquire this trick of suggesting that their feelings would be hurt?) The butler was therefore ordered.

When Mrs. Boody was told of this project her face clouded.

"Oh, Miss Alison," she said, sinking into a chair.

"Mrs. Boody, whatever is the matter?" Alison asked.

"Oh, Miss Alison," said Mrs. Boody, "not a hired butler, I implore you. That's what Boody was. Suppose . . . oh, it's too dreadful."

"But, Mrs. Boody," said Alison, "the world's full

of hired butlers. Why should this one be Mr. Boody?"

"I can't say, Miss," said Mrs. Boody, "but I've got that feeling. One of them presentiments. Suppose it should be right? I don't often have them, but they always come true. I had one before my sister's youngest died of the bronchitis. I had another before the young King and Queen of Spain, bless their hearts, were married. I knew there'd be a bomb; and there was."

"I'm very sorry," said Alison, "but there will be so many people here you couldn't possibly manage alone."

"No, I know that," said Mrs. Boody, still holding her left side, "but couldn't you get one of those nice young women who go out waiting? They're just as handy as a man and far more reliable. You can't keep the men from the decanters, both on the stairs and in the pantry: they're so accustomed to their little nips. The young women are always steady."

"I think we shall get a nice man," said Alison.

"They're none of them really nice," said Mrs. Boody. "Not hired butlers. Your own butler can be nice, but not the hired ones. I know them."

Mr. Ingleside, however, refused to alter his plans, and the butler was not countermanded. He was to be there at four o'clock to begin his preparations; and at that hour the bell rang, followed a minute after by a piercing scream. Alison and Ann looked at each other in alarm. "Mr. Boody!" Ann cried, as they both ran into the passage.

The sight that met their eyes was alarming—Mrs. Boody in a swoon on the floor, and a burly man stealthily retreating.

"Stop!" Alison cried; and he stepped back and closed the door. At the same time Ann ran for some water and Mrs. Boody opened her eyes. She looked all around in a dazed way and then fixed her gaze on the man.

"Oh, Horace!" she said.

"Well?" said the man.

"Oh, Horace! after all these years. I wonder you dare."

"Well," said the man, "if I'd have known, I shouldn't have dared."

"Are you Mr. Boody?" Alison asked him.

"That *was* my name," said the man, who seemed to have a faculty of swiftly recognizing the inevitable and meeting it philosophically.

"How could you be so cruel," Alison continued, "as to leave Mrs. Boody?"

"Well, Miss," said Mr. Boody, "it was better than living with her and not hitting it off."

"It was your duty to look after her," said Alison. "She might have starved."

"She hasn't," said Mr. Boody, with an expressive glance at Mrs. Boody's comfortable contours. Mrs. Boody by this time was on her feet. "She looks to me," Mr. Boody went on, "as if she had found a good place and was very happy in it — a great deal happier than she ever would have been with me. She's been luckier than I have, anyway."

"Oh, Horace," said Mrs. Boody.

Alison felt the presence of a fallacy, but could not phrase it.

Mr. Boody detected her difficulty, and hastened to improve his position. "My belief has always been," he said, "that people who don't get on should separate."

"Oh, Horace," said Mrs. Boody again, adding, "How often have you separated?"

This was a home thrust, and Mr. Boody could not disguise the fact that he felt it.

"But it's no subject of talk for young ladies like them to listen to," Mrs. Boody continued.

"That it isn't," agreed Mr. Boody, with cheerful quickness. "And I'm sure, Miss," he added to Alison, "that you'd like me to go back as soon as possible and send another man? Martha and I," he said, "would be bound to make a failure of your party. Speaking for myself," he said, "I'm sure I couldn't trust myself to hand anything. My nerve wouldn't permit of it."

"Your nerve," retorted Mrs. Boody, who was now quite herself again, "would permit of anything."

"I meant my nerves," said Mr. Boody meekly.

At this moment Mr. Ingleside arrived. "By God's special providence," as Mrs. Boody afterwards used always to say in telling the story. She looked upon this timeliness as a reward for years of conscientious chapel attendance.

Mr. Boody, who had been on the point of escaping in earnest, stood in deferential if not abject silence while Alison explained the situation to her father.

"You had better come in here," Mr. Ingleside

said to Mr. Boody, and they disappeared in his study, where they remained for some minutes. Then Mrs. Boody was sent for, and then Mr. Boody left the house; and in the course of an hour another butler who was nobody's husband arrived, and all went well.

Mrs. Boody, as it happened, scored all round; for her chances of being confronted with her husband any more were reduced practically to nothing, while Mr. Ingleside had seen to it that Mr. Boody in future was to pay for his freedom by a weekly allowance to his lawful wife, or accept consequences which might be very serious to one whose love of liberty was so warm.

Talking of the interview after dinner to his friends, Mr. Ingleside said that he had never had such difficulty in administering reproof. "What are you to do? Here was a man — a rover by disposition — who was thoroughly tired of his wife and had left her. As he said more than once: 'That's better than double harness wearing both of us out, isn't it?'

"What could I say but yes?

"Of course, the stupid thing is that his wife hadn't starved. But she hadn't. Realising that she had been abandoned, she dropped as soon as possible, like a sensible woman, into a good situation. That was Boody's trump card, and he made the most of it.

"'But you promised at the altar,' I said.

"'Pardon me,' he interrupted, 'we was registered.'

"Another set-back for me.

"'Well,' I said, 'whether you were registered or not, you took your wife for better or for worse, and it was on the distinct understanding that you would stick to her and support her.'

"'True,' he said. 'But I was very young then: I didn't know my own mind. I was excited, and that's the fact. It's a kind of intoxication,' he added, 'and then you get sober, and you're different.'

"What is one to say to a man like that? Every word he spoke was true.

"'Well,' I said, 'it's very unfortunate. In the eye of the law she is your wife, and you must contribute to her,' and I drew up a paper for him to sign.

"While I was writing it, I remembered that he was a Don Juan: it is so difficult to keep all these points together in one's mind.

"'And what,' I asked, 'do you say to Mrs. Boody's charge that you went off with another woman?'

"'It's quite true,' he said: 'I did.'

"'After your first experience of marriage?'

"'Bless your heart, sir,' he said, 'that makes no difference. One always thinks the next is the perfect one.'

"True again.

"'But don't you know it's wicked?' I said.

"'Oh, I've no doubt of that,' he replied, 'but I'm so lonely.'

"And so ended my career as a censor of immorality."

Her new sense of immunity, and the addition of several pounds a year to her income, were as nothing compared with Mrs. Boody's triumph as one whose

presentiments come true. On the following Sunday she paid a round of visits to her friends to tell the wonderful story. A husband had long been a negligible ingredient of life; but a story! — there was more comfort in a good story every day, and she now had one worth telling. Whatever scandal may have been talked in the dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, and boudoirs of the houses where her friends were in service — whatever narrations of unhappiness and discord and infidelity (and what else is there to talk about?) — they were empty compared with the great Boody presentiment, as detailed in the kitchen or the servants' hall.

"You remember," Mrs. Boody would begin, "you remember that presentiment I had about poor Annie's child before it died of the bronchitis? You remember how I said it couldn't live, poor mite? And you remember that other presentiment — I must have told you often — that other presentiment I had about the young King and Queen of Spain, Princess Ena that was, bless their hearts? On their wedding day? How I knew there'd be a bomb, and there was! You remember that, don't you? Well, that's nothing to what I'm going to tell you now. . . ."

So Mrs. Boody would begin. Don't you envy her? I think she was at those moments the happiest woman on earth.

It was not a story that lost either in the telling or the retelling. "And at that moment," she would say, while the audience drew closer still — "and at that moment, while Boody's hand was absolutely

turning the door handle to run — and you know I should never have had any hold on him if he had got away then — at that moment, by God's special providence, who should walk in but the master. . . ."

If all deserted wives were so happy!

CHAPTER XXVII

IN WHICH AN EVENING IS SPENT AMONG CURIOSITIES, AUTOGRAPHS, AND OYSTERS

DR. STAMINER entertained the whole party a little later. Mr. Ingleside protested at first, for he said it might be thought by each of his friends that some such feast was a kind of obligation; but he soon gave way on being assured that they were not so foolish. "Besides," said the doctor, "you are coming to dine with me for my own ends, and not for your pleasure. I want to see what my staff is capable of. For no outside help will be added. No butlers! Nothing but women folk here," he said. "I couldn't afford to run the risk of exposing the secret skeleton in my housekeeper's cupboard. The return of Boody has made me a more serious man. One never knows what may happen."

There is a story of a Gower Street antiquary who preceded our doctor by nearly a century—Mr. Douce, I think it was—who, when he too was giving a dinner party and his housekeeper informed him that his usual dish, a leg of mutton, would be insufficient for so many, replied with admirable logic, "Then get two legs." Dr. Staminer, all unconscious of this circumstance, did precisely the same.

After dinner, the company turned to the examination of the collection. The doctor had something

for everybody. He had early printed books and historical broadsides, autographs, and pewter, old silver and vessels of horn, snuff-boxes and *lusus naturæ*, South Sea carvings and straw boxes, pipes and tinder boxes, shells and watches, ivories and porcelain. As I have said, he preferred the odd to the beautiful; but he had a few beautiful things too, such as blocks of matrix opal, burning blue and green and crimson through milky clouds, strange shapes carved in cool jade from the beds of Chinese rivers, and a little old Flemish woodwork.

In art Dr. Staminer belonged to what one might call the Hogarth school of collector. Whatever else he might have in the way of prints, he had at any rate all Hogarth. The moderns had for him worked in vain; in vain had Whistler and Muirhead Bone taken the burin in hand. But he liked Constable in David Lucas's mezzotints; and his stairs were dignified by Piranesi.

Ann and Alison were perhaps most interested by the *lusus naturæ*, always so fascinating to the young, and not a little bewildering to the old — those wonderful pieces of agate and jasper, chalcedony and other stone, in the very hidden heart of which Nature, possibly æons before the creation of the protoplasm from which animals and men were after æons more to emerge, had devised the simulacra of these creatures — heads so like those of people we know as to make us start, recognizable birds, horses, and dogs.

Mr. Ingleside could not be diverted from the drawers containing the autographs. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Why, you old fox, if you haven't some

letters from Lamb to Martin Burney! I thought they had all disappeared."

"So they had," said the doctor, smiling the masterful smile of the successful collector: "into that cabinet! But I have only a few. Where the others are is truly a mystery. In America very likely. Read them, Ingleside. They will probably be as fresh to me as to any of you, for it's years since I bought them. I remember annotating them at the time."

Mr. Ingleside arranged them in chronological order. "This," he said, "according to your note, Staminer, is the earliest. It is undated, and conjecturally is somewhere about 1808. Martin Burney, I should first say, was the son of Admiral Burney, who sailed with Cook, and the nephew of Madame D'Arblay. He was about Lamb's age, but Lamb was much older in every way, and in fact a deal of Martin had probably never grown up. He was a gentle creature with a kind of doglike affection for his friends, no sense of practical life whatever, and liable to very foolish impulses. The Lambs were very fond of him. He outlived both, and wept at Mary Lamb's funeral with a lack of restraint which disgusted Crabb Robinson.

"Here is the first letter: —

'My dear Martin, — I send this by our good friend Ayrton to tell you that the time for self-reproach and hiding has past. As to what you have done, I have only an impaired inkling; but I know your nature and what it would never do, and I say in all gravity and love, absent thee from felicity no more. You have had your share; it is not well to indulge

yourself too far in abnegation. Remember moreover that you are not alone: you are part of a family. The right to chastise ourselves is no doubt one that human beings will cherish as long as most; but a time comes when the question must be put, Are we not chastening the innocent too? You must search your heart with that inquiry at once, Martin, and when you have supplied the only answer, you must hasten back to Little James Street to comfort your poor mother and restore in the Admiral — who, I am in a position to inform you, is not so angry as he pretends, having himself once been young — a desire for a rubber. All is not lost because one has been foolish. — Yours most truly,

'C. LAMB.'

"In 1818, Lamb, thinking his literary career over (before it had really begun), collected his 'Works' in two volumes, and they were dedicated to Martin Burney in a sonnet, ending with the beautiful lines —

'In all thy threading of this worldly maze
(And I have watched thee almost from a child),
Free from self-seeking, envy, low design,
I have not found a whiter soul than thine.'

"Here is the very letter that accompanied the dedicatory sonnet: —

'20, GREAT RUSSELL STREET
'*April 8th*, 1818

'DEAR LAD, as I shall always call you no matter how grey you become or how senile you talk, this is the sonnet which I wish to inscribe on a fly leaf of my WORKS — WORKS! do you hear? — so that they may have at any rate one page of which I shall never feel ashamed. For the rest, I alternate between misgiving and a feeling that a few things may be neatly said, but whether I would like to burn them or write them all over again I am undecided. Am I clear?

'My WORKS — henceforward *your works* by virtue of this fourteener — are going to be in two plump little volumes. Have you ever had twins before? I am an old hand at it, for the Poetry for Children and the Tales from Shakespeare were gemini too. — Thine, C. L.'

"In 1821 the Admiral published his *Essay on the Game of Whist*, and Lamb wrote to congratulate him on it. There is no date: —

'MY DEAR ADMIRAL, — I have now perused your treatise with pleasure and edification. Since you would not give me one, and since I buy no new books, I have had to borrow Martin's copy, and I adjure you when next you see him to tell him from me that he must extract another from the paternal store, for never will I part with *mine*, as I now call it.

'That is the only true subject for the Essayist's pen — Whist, the only game in which intellect and recreation equally participate. You make me ashamed of the frivolous wayward saunterings of my *London* pen, concerned as it is with such trifles as the South Sea House, New Year's Eve, Christ's Hospital and so forth. Looking back upon my recent bewildering activities — to think of any sane man recommencing author at my age, after the publication of his *Works* too! — I charge myself with writing real sense only in that paper wherein Sarah Battle unbosoms on the Great Topic, your Topic and — henceforward — mine. Yours till the last Trump, and, as a Christian, I trust after, C. L.'

"And here," Mr. Ingleside added, "is a note, in the doctor's hand, to the effect that Lamb kept his word about not returning Martin's copy, for it was sold after his death with other volumes from his library.

"The next letter is dated 18 November, 1821, the day after the Admiral's death: —

'MY DEAR MARTIN, — The sad news was brought by Ayrton. We had heard there was no hope; but the shock of the death of an old friend cannot to any appreciable extent be softened by fore-knowledge. He was and he is not: that is the immitigable fact. A time has come when it seems that none of my friends are safe; and you would be wise to avoid me. Don't be seen with me. Run when I appear. There's Jem White gone; and then, only a month ago, my brother; and now your father. We shall soon be alone, Martin. Give your mother our love. I say our but I have not told Mary yet. Her recovery is so recent I hesitate to do so; and this will explain my absence from the funeral. As to that other matter, I am doing what I can and shall see J. R. shortly.

'May God bless us all. C. L.'

"The phrase 'that other matter,'" Mr. Ingleside added, "is said in the pencil note to refer to some difficulty that Martin Burney had been having with his employer, John Rickman, Clerk Assistant at the Table of the House of Commons, and Lamb's friend.

"The two next are more frivolous: —

'DEAR MARTIN' — (the date is 7 November, 1823, Colebrooke Cottage, Islington) — 'Dear Martin, — We count on you for Sunday. Leg of lamb at three precisely. If you fail us you will miss the sight of the season — G. D.'s diluvian shoes, still drying in the garden from his immersion. He forbade us to set them near the fire, as heat cracketh them — as though aught could crack further such cracks as Time has been making these twenty years. But come and see them. You cannot miss them: they hang on the line. — Thine,

'C. L.'

"G. D. is of course George Dyer, who, being nearly blind, had walked into the New River in front of Lamb's house a few days before. The next is a year later: —

'DEAR MARTIN, — You offered once to let us use your subscription at Cawthorn's Library when you were circuiting up and down in the land seeking whom you might defend. Mary is sadly hipped at this moment and was never so destitute of such light fictions as C. disburses. Will you authorize him to send her a bundle no matter how foolish? Hazlitt ——'

"The rest is torn away," said Mr. Ingleside. "What a loss!

"We come now to a letter to Mrs. Burney, referring to the essay 'The Wedding' to be found in the second volume of *Elia:* —

'COLEBROOKE COTTAGE
'*May 24th*, 1825.

'MY DEAR MRS. BURNEY, — In the forthcoming *London* look out for some recollections of happier days for all of us — although I must not talk like that lest the Powers hear me and punish me for ingratitude, since I am now free and well. Mary has not been ill for so long that I tremble when I count the months. Recollection then of happier days, let me say, for you, for I have been sending my memory back to Sarah's wedding and my foolishness with the Admiral afterwards. You will not be offended, I know. I am a sad autobiographer and none of my friends are safe when the *London* clamours, and when having nothing but time, as now, I have none. I must try to get to Little James Street soon and once more shake you by the hand. — Your sincere friend, CHARLES LAMB.'

'Mary sends her love and wishes that the rubbers were not all over. So do I. But then I wish so many things.'

"The next letter was written only a day after. To Martin. It explains itself: —

'COLEBROOKE COTTAGE
'*May 25th*, 1825

'DEAR MARTIN, — News has just come that my brother John's widow has joined him in that place where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage but where I presume husbands and wives do not have to be reintroduced when they meet. I must attend the funeral since I am not only her brother-in-law but executor. Will you come to Colebrooke on Sunday and explicate the last will and testament to my jaded apprehensions? I saw it once and I recollect with alarm how it bristled with the terms of your Mystery. There is so little money for the relict's daughter that I wish to get my legal advice free as the air we breathe, which so far as I have been able to observe during a pilgrimage of almost exactly fifty years is the only gratuitous commodity that exists. — Thine, C. L.'

"A note," said Mr. Ingleside, "remarks that Lamb was taken ill almost directly after this letter and remained ill for some time, while his sister failed again too. The last is not dated at all: —

'DEAR MARTIN, — A barrel of oysters has fallen upon us from the blue; we know not at whose bidding, but each has a guess. I like to stand aside and watch my friends engage in combats of generosity, and I care not who is the winner so they fight gamely and exchange shrewd blows. Oysters will be on the table at nine to-morrow with concomitant porter. We shall be disappointed if you eat none of them.'"

"A phrase or two of that letter, or something very like it, is repeated in Lamb's 'Thoughts on Presents of Game,'" said Dr. Staminer. "Perhaps we may date it somewhere at the same time — in 1830. But it doesn't matter."

"Ah me!" said Mr. Ingleside. "There's a good

sound about that! The brave days! The brave nights! Oysters! Who eats oysters for supper in his own house any longer, with or without concomitant porter? Once I could make three dozen look very foolish."

Henry Thrace, who had been deep in a portfolio of Georgian caricatures, sprang up excitedly. "Look here," he said, "that gives me an idea. If I take a cab and go down to Wilton's and bring back some oysters, will you eat them? You don't mind, doctor?"

"Mind," said the doctor, "how could I?"

"I should love to do it," said Henry Thrace, and he was gone, followed by Ramer, who claimed the right to provide the stout.

"Those are men," said Mr. Ingleside. "But your servants will probably give notice *en bloc*."

"They shan't do that," said Alison, "because Ann and I will get the things ready for them;" and they went downstairs with the doctor and laid the table afresh.

A stationary whirring in the street told that a taxicab was at the door, and the doctor and Christie hurried down to help. They found Henry Thrace and Ramer accompanied by an oyster-opening confederate and a hamper containing twelve dozen.

"If this isn't enough," said Henry, "the man will go back for more."

The cab also contained a gallon jar of stout — for Ramer had refused the bottled variety. In case the house had none, he had also brought two loaves of brown bread.

"Now," said Mr. Ingleside, as once more they assembled at the table, "we re-create the sacred past! This shell I shall keep as a souvenir of a gallant effort. I shall have the date engraved upon it to-morrow."

"I am glad you did not ask us to open them," said Dr. Staminer, "for two reasons. One is that we should all be eating bits of shell, and the other that I now know what I have long wanted to discover: what it is that oyster-openers do for a living when the month has no R in it. This one tells me that he is employed in Hyde Park to collect pennies for the chairs. It is most happy. Chairs, it seems, come in just as oysters go out, and go out just as oysters come in. Voltaire himself could not have hit upon a finer example of the wisdom of Providence."

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN WHICH A MIGHTY SOCIAL ENGINE LAYS BARE SOME SECRETS

CHRISTIE having been taken down the river in the *Caprice*, and having written a very successful article on his voyage, insisted upon entertaining Alison and Ann at his office.

"The rush," he said, "is over by twelve. Come here at a quarter past, and after I've shown you the place we'll go to Soho for lunch. I've just discovered a new restaurant. *Déjeuner*, five courses, one and three."

"My dear Christie," said Mr. Ingleside, "I can't have my girls poisoned. It must be horse and dog at that price."

"I don't care if it is," said Christie, "it's jolly good."

The girls were led through a throbbing building of passages and doors to Christie's room, which had "Assistant Editor" painted on it. As they entered he rose wearily and importantly from a desk covered with papers; other papers littered the floor.

"I'm just through," Christie said. "Look round the room, won't you, while you are waiting, or read the papers."

They did so, and paved the way for a number of questions when the time was ripe.

"How is it," Alison asked, "that in order to edit one paper you have to be surrounded by all the others?"

"That's because ours is an evening paper," said Christie, "and evening papers are so poor that they have to live on their rich morning brethren. A morning paper," he added, "can afford special correspondents and all the rest of it. These" — and he held up a huge pair of scissors — "are our special correspondents."

"And what is this curious chart?" Alison asked, pointing to a kind of map divided into columns with little mysterious marks in each.

"Ah," said Christie, "that is a great dodge. That shows me at a glance the amount of advertising a publisher does and the number of reviews he gets. Then we can be fair all round."

Every now and then a man would burst in and, seeing the two girls, apologize and withdraw in confusion.

"Who was that?" Ann asked, as one of them, a sad, grey ascetic, entered, halted abashed, and disappeared.

"That's our principal humorist," said Christie. "He edits the funny column."

"He doesn't look like it," said Ann.

"No," said Christie, "none of them do nowadays. It's a point of honour with the new humorists to appear miserable. Come and see my chief," he added, and led the way to the adjoining room, where they found a genial man smoking a large cigar and reading MSS.

"I'm so glad you came in," he said. "I've reached a point where I don't know whether an article is too good or too bad to be printed."

"It must be very difficult to tell, when it is written by hand," said Alison.

"Yes; but one goes a good deal by the handwriting," said the editor.

"But supposing some one got the boot-boy to copy out one of Stevenson's essays," Alison said.

"My dear young lady," cried the editor, "what a perfectly horrible idea! You have done for my peace of mind for ever. I shall never dare to glance casually at a manuscript again."

"Typing is best, of course," Ann said.

"Yes," replied the editor; "but, in spite of your sister's bomb-shell, I should prefer the first paragraph by hand and the rest typed. That is the ideal condition for the selector."

"What is done in this room?" Alison asked.

"Everything," said the editor. "If Christie has been pretending that any share of the labour of bringing out this paper falls on him, he has deceived you. He ought to do things, but he doesn't. No doubt," he continued, "you saw in his room a certain amount of picturesque muddle, a large paste-pot, and a pair of scissors like those in *Struwwelpeter?* Yes? I thought so. Don't be under any mistake. That is merely local colour. The work, as I said, is done here.

"To give you an example of what I have to do," the editor continued, in his pleasant tone of raillery, "look at that basket."

He held up the waste-paper basket and showed it full of envelopes and torn paper. "This morning's post," he said. "And who opened it? I. Who read it? I. Who tore it up? I. And who will have to answer the balance? I.

"Now," he went on, "have you any notion what the letters contain that people write to editors? I don't mean the letters we print, but the letters we don't print? Here's one, from a reader who says he has taken in our paper for twenty-two years, but if we ever have another paragraph like the one on Tuesday last, in which there was a flippant allusion to Noah's Ark, he must cease to be a subscriber.

"Here's another, from a theatrical manager complaining that we went out of our way yesterday to mention a rival by way of a comparison when, considering what he, the writer, pays us a year for advertisements, we ought to have used one of his own productions for our purpose. If it ever happens again, he will withdraw his advertisement."

"Does the advertisement matter?" Alison asked.

The editor gasped. "My dear Miss Innocence," he said, "the advertisements are our life blood. As a matter of bed-rock fact, every paper is edited by the advertisement manager. Never believe anyone who tells you that this is not the case. We others sit here, in a kind of royal state, and return manuscripts and accept invitations to banquets and receptions, and draw — in some cases, not mine — fairly tidy salaries; but we are ciphers. It is the advertisement manager who is really

running the show, dictating the policy, modifying the opinions. I could tell you — but I won't. The topic is too painful.

"Every editor's heart is seared from this cause. We go about and look important and inscrutable; but all the time we know the bitter truth: we cannot deceive ourselves.

"Christie, of course," he added, "is doubly cursed with secret shame, for not only is he by way of being an editor and suffering therefore these ordinary pangs, but he is a Radical and Socialist too, and every morning has to write, or approve, opinions diametrically opposed to his own."

Christie groaned.

"This drawer," the editor continued, "is labelled, you will observe, 'Museum.' That's where our real curiosities are kept: the letters which it would be too cruel to print but which are too precious to lose. Here is one from quite a well-known author whose books you very likely delight in, asking for a special review of his book because he recently had the honour of being included in a royal shooting party.

"Authors are almost the worst. Their passion for notice is a kind of disease. There is one novelist who has written so much and variously that no public event can occur to which some kind of allusion cannot be found in his works. He writes to us continually drawing attention to these remarkable instances of foresight, and even frames the paragraphs himself. Here is one beginning, 'Yet another coincidence from the voluminous pen of Mr. ——.'

Here is another: 'Mr. ——, long known as a specialist in intelligent anticipation, has done it again. . . .' I assure you there are public men who do things to advertise themselves that pill-makers would stick at.

"Here's another from a gentleman complaining of an affront. He begins with a sentence which ought to be printed on public men's note-paper, they use it so often: 'My attention has been drawn to.' It is a remarkable thing that no one who is affronted by a paper ever by any chance discovers the article for himself: his attention has to be drawn to it."

"Don't they ever fail to see it?" Alison asked.

"Never," said the editor.

"Then we have a whole bundle of applications from photographers to deceased authors whom we have quoted, addressed care of this paper, asking them to make appointments for sittings, for inclusion in the Eminent Notabilities Series, and so forth. Here's one addressed to Walter Savage Landor. Here's one for William Hazlitt. Here's one for Wordsworth."

"Not really?" said Ann.

"Absolutely," said the editor. "You have no idea how ignorant people can be."

"And letters threatening libel actions!" said Christie.

"Oh yes. They arrive daily," said the editor. "Such is the state of the English law in this matter, and such the expense and harassment of defending oneself, that the threatening of libel proceedings has

become a recognized industry. Otherwise penniless men have been known to live comfortably on the slips of the pen of careless journalists whose proprietors prefer to pay a little solatium rather than be subjected to the terrific costs of the Law Courts."

"Yes," said Christie, "it was for their protection that the blessed word 'alleged' was invented — demand always in time leading to supply — and some reporters are so careful that one is credited with the phrase, 'Alleged eclipse of the moon at Southampton,' and another, 'Alleged prize distribution at Acton.'"

"Those grey hairs you see on poor Christie's temples," said the editor, "are entirely due to panics over paragraphs that have gone to press, and cannot be recalled, and may have libels in them."

"What exactly is libel?" Alison asked.

"Ah!" said Christie.

"Libel," said the editor, "is that form of truth out of which a man may make money by swearing it to be a lie."

"Then it's not much fun being an editor," Alison remarked.

"Very little," said the editor. "And there's not much profit in it either. The work is hard; the hours are preposterous, turning — on a morning paper, I mean — night into day and day into night; the responsibilities are heavy; the reward is trumpery. One has all the kicks and very few of the ha'pence. And you may add to this the continual question whether the game is intellectually, to say nothing of spiritually, worth the candle — whether it

is all quite good enough. For an editor, after all, no matter how good he is — whether he is Delane himself — must be, by the nature of his task, a good deal of a busybody. He must be more interested in other people's affairs than a gentleman quite wants to be. He must often — unless his paper is a very different one from any that I have ever known — have to lend himself to opinions which he does not quite believe; while the opportunity given him of unceasingly criticizing the party he does not belong to is very bad for the character, inducing arrogance and superiority and gradually wearing down the sense of justice. But when it comes to choosing a line of country instead, I must confess to being stumped. Therefore one goes on. And of course it's frightfully interesting too, being behind the scenes. And yet . . . I know a little cottage near a pine wood. . . . Ah, well."

Christie afterwards took them to the sub-editor's rooms, where the ruins of countless other papers lay all over the floor and the place bristled with more scissors; to the composing room, where terribly human linotypes stretched out their long hands even more likely to do mischief than the idle ones of boys and girls that Satan so loves; to the casting rooms, where the lead plates were prepared by hot and oily men in their shirt-sleeves; to the printing room, where the engines were all at work, rolling off the first edition (which is called the fourth); and then he took them to a window looking down upon a side street filled with horses and carts, motor tricycles, and a rabble of rough, round-shoul-

dered youths with bicycles, all waiting to carry the papers over London: "even to Mrs. Wyborn's," as Ann said.

"Well," said Christie, over their pseudo-French lunch, "what do you think of newspaper work?"

"I think," said Alison, "that you ought to join a paper of your own way of thinking."

"That wouldn't be journalism," said Christie. "That would be too real. It's the unreality of it all that's so interesting. Journalism is the only romantic employment left. To express your own views all the time is to turn the journalist into a missionary."

"But it's so immoral," said Alison, "to say what you don't mean."

"Journalism is immoral," said Christie. "I guess that's its greatest charm."

CHAPTER XXIX

IN WHICH A RETIRED BEAUTY BECOMES WISTFUL

MR. INGLESIDE never proposed to Alison that she should do anything to earn her independence. That was part of the difference between the two girls: Ann needed an outlet for her activity, Alison needed none. Ann was swift and practical and, although not in any objectionable sense, selfish. Alison was unselfish — or, as the cynic would say, her selfishness took the form of thinking of others. Ann, as we have seen, had come home with the idea of helping her father; but, seeing how completely his wants were supplied by himself, she had been glad to do something else. Alison had no such preconceived plans, but she had quietly and unconsciously made new wants for her father which only she could supply. He would often find her, for example, waiting for him in Whitehall what time the C. B.s realized that home was best. She played and sang to him. They discussed novels together. That Ann was not such a companion was of course not Ann's fault, for she was much younger. In a girl the four years between seventeen and twenty-one make a difference: and Alison, too, had seen death.

Had Alison permitted herself to ponder upon the great question of what to do, instead of doing a thousand little characteristic things, there was at any rate one acquaintance all ready with a suggestion. Miss Parris was panting to shed the ray. Miss Parris was that indispensable adjunct to family life, a sewing-woman: one of those tidy border-landers who treat parlour maids with dignity and are referred to by parlour maids as persons. She was elderly and coquettish, and it was evident that a career of prettiness lay behind her.

They sat at the window sewing. It was a fine gusty morning, and the clouds scudded over the wharf buildings on the other side of the river as bravely almost as if the Thames were the real sea. And indeed there were real enough waves on it. Skirts were flapping on the Embankment, and now and then a hat blew off. Miss Parris glanced at the busy trams following so fast upon each other. "Very different from my time," she said, fixing her time, as is the tendency of the sewing-woman, rather in the past than the present. Not that Miss Parris was by any means prepared to come to an end or was at all lacking in vitality, but everything that happened to her now in her maturity appeared unimportant and trivial in comparison with the hectic triumphs of her heyday when she was Stella De Lisle. Even the name of Stella is no more — dead almost as Jabez, though for different reasons.

"In my time," said Miss Parris, "there was no electricity to help a girl to get to Clapham in a few minutes. Nothing but an old lumbering bus, my

dear, and on a wet night you had to fight to get into that, and very often you didn't manage it then. Many's the time I've had to walk home after the theatre and the very skies falling. London's very different now, with its trams and tubes and electric light and taxicabs.

"You've got a sweet face and a very neat ankle, my dear," Miss Parris continued, after a period of thought. "Why don't you go on the stage? But I suppose your pa wouldn't let you."

Alison said that she herself did not care about it.

"You make a great mistake, my dear, believe me," said Miss Parris. "If you had felt like that in my time, I could have understood it better; but not now. The actress of to-day is a woman to be envied. Look at the restaurants open to her, just for one thing. In my time there were no Savoys and Carltons; or if there were, they weren't full of actresses having expensive lunches and suppers. But now? I sometimes go into the courtyard of the Savoy just to see the little dears driving up with their gentlemen in the taxis. 'Ah,' I say to them, only they don't hear it, 'if you weren't on the stage, you'd be eating half a pork pie with a cup of cocoa in an A.B.C.'"

"How do you know they're actresses?" Alison asked.

"How do I know? How do I know my own name?" Miss Parris asked. "Besides, there's the picture post-cards." Miss Parris sighed. "Ah!" she resumed, "it is when I look at the picture post-cards, my dear, that I feel strongest that I was born

too soon. In my time a girl might be as pretty as you liked" — Miss Parris drew herself together with a little pleased movement — "and only the theatre-goers knew it. There were photographs, of course, but they were two shillings each, and only of *prima donnas* and *première dansooses* and Ellen Terry and Violet Cameron. But now? Why, I'm told a pretty actress can make two or three hundred a year out of picture post-card fees alone. Isn't that extraordinary?"

Alison said it was so.

"And the tooth-powders," said Miss Parris. "There was plenty of tooth-powder in my time, of course; but we didn't say so much about it. The papers weren't full of it as they are to-day. There's one house where I go, my dear, where they always put the *Sketch* and the *Tatler* in my room, and it's extraordinary how they run to pretty actresses showing their teeth. One would think that photographers were all dentists. I'm told that an actress with a good set can make a fortune out of the tooth-powder people alone, to say nothing of the face-creams. To give you an instance, my dear, of how fortune's favours are distributed in this world — there's a literary gentleman lodging in the same house as me who writes face-cream advertisements. You know them, my dear, although there's little enough need for you to — the stories about the society lady who came all over wrinkles and crow's feet before the season was half done, and after trying everything else heard of So-and-so's famous pomatum, and lost them all in a single night? That

kind of thing. Well, this gentleman writes them, and he gets a guinea each for those that are accepted; but what do you think the actress gets for her portrait to be used along with them? As much as two hundred pounds! And yet people talk of the decay of the drama. Why, my dear, the drama's only just beginning."

Miss Parris remained silent again, lost in the contemplation of golden potentialities. "And when I think of my time!" she resumed. "There was only hair then, and they didn't go to actresses for that. Not as a rule. You don't remember the lady in the Mrs. Allen's restorer picture? Well, she wasn't an actress. I happen to know, because there was a dresser in our theatre who knew who it was. The face was everywhere, but with no name to it — no use to a girl at all. Not like the tooth-powders to-day! The consequence was that the pubic didn't know her, poor thing. It must have been very hard to have had the best-known head of hair in England — and a pretty face too — and be as anonymous as a bus-conductor. I've no doubt in my own mind that many's the gentleman that must have tried to get her name and address from Mrs. Allen's people: but whether they got it is another pair of shoes.

"No," said Miss Parris, "an actress in my time had to make her way by means of the stage. Of course there were gentlemen with bouquets at the stage door after the show, and gentlemen who sat in the same stall every night and clapped their hands with meaning right at their own favourites, just as it is now and I've no doubt in my own mind always will

be; but for want of the picture post-cards and the illustrated papers people didn't turn round in the streets then and say, 'There's So-and-so' — as it might be Gertie Schiller — as they do now. Oh, dear, no! Why, I can only remember one occasion when I heard a passer-by say, 'That's Stella De Lisle,' and I found out afterwards it was one of our own scene-shifters out with his fiancée."

Miss Parris remained silent for some time after this recollection.

"Think over what I've said," she remarked at last. "Your pa would be sure to come round. They always do."

CHAPTER XXX

IN WHICH THE STARS FIGHT FOR JOHN

MARLTYE was certainly a very beautiful place. It stood alone, not far from Byfleet, lying low, as Tudor houses always did, with a moat three parts of the way around it and a number of cedar trees stationed like sentinels here and there in the grounds. The house itself was of brick with a roof of Horsham stone, such as the deal timbers of the present time are incapable of supporting; but the greater part of both walls and roof was covered with the little vivid self-clinging ampelopsis, which promised in September to turn fire.

Miss Muirhead and Miss Lingard stayed at the village inn for some time, while Miss Muirhead examined the garden alone or with one of the great professional gardeners whose men were to do the work. She covered their sitting-room with plans and sheets of figures.

"What I want," Miss Muirhead said to Mr. Ingleside, who had gone down for the day, "is some one to represent me here and see that the men work, and to send me a report every now and then. Have you any friend that could do that?"

Mr. Ingleside at first said that he had not, and

then he thought of John. "Of course," he exclaimed, "John Campion"; and John was written to and asked to come down at once.

As it happened, John and his mother were engaged on this very day in one of their periodical conversations on the subject of his career; so that Mr. Ingleside's letter dropped opportunely from the sky.

John had not stayed long at the garage. "I'm very quick," he explained. "I have a natural aptitude for engineering, the manager says. There's very little I don't know about a car. All I need now is practice. You're not looking very fit, mother; how would you like me to take you for a little motor tour about England? I think I could find the time, and it would set you up."

But Mrs. Campion declined. "I don't think so just now," she said. "I think you ought to be seriously trying to get something to do. All your friends think so too. Mr. Ingleside was talking about it again only on Sunday."

"I wish people wouldn't talk about me so much," said John. "Why the devil can't they mind their own affairs?"

"It's very kind of them," said his mother, "to interest themselves in you. But seriously, you must make up your mind as to what you would like to do. Then I can help you. It's difficult to help you if you have no definite object in view."

"Well," said John, "I have, as a matter of fact, been thinking a great deal about it. I woke this morning horribly early — quite by half-past six, I'm

sure — and I couldn't get to sleep again, I was thinking so hard; and I've come to the conclusion I should make an excellent director of a large concern. The fellows at the garage were very much struck by my sense of order and authoritative ways."

"Yes," Mrs. Campion replied, "but you can't become a director all in a minute at your age. A directorship is a kind of reward for long years of work."

"There you go," said John, "throwing cold water on the whole thing. Can't there be exceptions? Can't there be born directors?"

Mrs. Campion said that there might be, but even then there was a difficulty of finding companies to direct. "What company are you thinking of?" she inquired.

"I was thinking," said John, "that one might be found. I was wondering whether you and Uncle Ralph and perhaps Uncle Bertram might not like to form a company? I hear on all sides that, in spite of the boom and all the new companies, the future of rubber is still something terrific. Rubber is wanted for everything nowadays. Think of tyres alone; and then there are hot-water bottles, you know, and artists. Well, I was wondering if you might not like me to go out to Borneo or to some South Sea Island and acquire a tract of land for you to grow rubber on. I feel quite confident that I could get on perfect terms with the natives directly. I should of course take out beads and the things that they like. Jack For-

rester, who was at Merton with me, has got a job of that kind and he's doing splendidly, and he was a most infernal ass."

"I am quite sure neither of your uncles would be willing to invest their money that way," said Mrs. Campion.

"Well, there you are," said John. "Everything is against me. I think it's a great shame that you didn't make up your mind what I ought to be when I was at school, and then I could have been prepared for it. Lots of the fellows knew what they were going to be — lawyers and doctors and things like that — and they read accordingly. How would you like me to be sports master at Eton?"

"I should be very proud of you," said Mrs. Campion.

"There's no chance," said John. "Those things go by favouritism."

"Well, there are other schools that want sports masters, I suppose," said Mrs. Campion.

"I shouldn't care to be anywhere but at Eton," said John.

He found Mr. Ingleside's letter on the breakfast table when he reached it at eleven the next morning.

"By Jove, mother," he said, "here's a go! Miss Muirhead, the great gardener, wants me to superintend a very important piece of work."

"Miss Muirhead!" exclaimed Mrs. Campion. "Oh yes, of course, Mr. Ingleside's cousin."

"I don't know what that has to do with it," said John. "It doesn't matter whose cousin she is. The

important thing is that she wants a good man to help her."

"But you don't know much about gardening, do you?" asked Mrs. Campion.

"There's no need to," said John. "This is a post of responsibility and authority. Some one is wanted to keep a sharp eye on a large number of lazy devils. But so far as that goes, I'm very keen about gardening. I've often thought of taking it up seriously. Mrs. Cathcart, when I was staying there last week-end with Jack, said my colour sense was remarkable. She asked my advice on several things. But what rot to be talking like this when very likely the train's gone."

He rushed for the *A.B.C.* and found that there was in fact nothing that could now get him to Marltye for a picnic lunch, as had been suggested in the letter.

"There," he said, "that's what comes of not calling me properly. I've always told Purdon to knock twice, to make sure, and I'm certain she only knocked once this morning. Now I must take a taxi."

"But, my dear boy, it will cost a pound."

"I can't help it," said John. "You wouldn't have me break faith with them and be late on the first day?"

Mrs. Campion did not continue the argument: she merely said that if he intended to drive there perhaps he would not mind her going too, as it was such a nice day. John was by no means radiant under the suggestion. There was something grotesque, he said, about a man's being accompanied by his

mother on such an occasion, and taxis were very jolty; but he magnanimously waived these points, and off they went together.

John talked all the way of his new work. It would necessitate getting rooms in the village, he thought, and perhaps furnishing them decently. He would perhaps get a horse to take him to and from Marltye. It was rather lucky he was going to his tailor's this week, as he would need one or two roughish country suits.

Mrs. Campion said she was sure that the work would not entail residence there. All that was wanted was frequent visits. John at first scoffed at this, and then agreed. "Very well," he said, "then I must hire a motor and run down every other afternoon. You can come with me sometimes, mother. It will do you good."

Miss Muirhead, however, offered too little for such splendours. John was given a room in the house, and the resident gardener's wife "did for him" when he stayed there; and when he did not, he travelled to London and back again by train. And thus began his career as an earner of money.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN WHICH THE *CAPRICE* CARRIES A HAPPY PARTY TO A TUDOR GRANGE

WHEN Leslie had heard about Marltye Grange he was quite excited.

"I know it," he said. "The old oak is wonderful. I tried to buy the staircase a year or so ago for a house I was altering, but they wouldn't part. Very sensible of them. I think the Yankee ought to let me tinker the place, just to keep it all in the family, so to speak."

As it happened, Mr. Thayer was at that very moment writing to Miss Muirhead to ask her to entrust the task of decorating the house fittingly to some one in whom she had confidence, expense, as before, no object; and Miss Muirhead, who knew all about Leslie, passed on the commission. "I want the house right," he wrote: "not necessarily Tudor inside, but right and comfortable—if the two things will go together. Every room must have hot-air pipes and double windows." In the same letter he added that he should like a nice drawing of the place to show to his friends if Miss Muirhead could find an artist; and of course who could that artist be but Vycount Ramer?

"We're all in this," said Leslie, the next Friday.

"Let's all go down on Sunday and explore the place. Doctor, you must certainly come."

"On a Sunday?" exclaimed Dr. Staminer. "Me? I haven't broken the Sabbath for years."

"But you will come," said Alison. "I'll look after you."

"I spend Sunday on my collections," said the doctor. "If I go out, my housekeeper will give notice: she'll think I'm mad."

"Very well, then," said Alison, "she must go, and I'll be your housekeeper instead;" and on this understanding the doctor agreed.

"Couldn't we go by water?" Mr. Ingleside asked. "You say it's near Byfleet? Couldn't we go up the river as far as the mouth of Wey, and then up the Wey as near to Byfleet as possible?"

"Of course," said Leslie, "the very thing. I'll arrange it all."

The *Caprice* held six in addition to its tattooed engineer; and the Inglesides, Richard Oast, Dr. Staminer, and Miss Muirhead made up the party, the others going by train. Mrs. Campion, John, and Leslie were to arrange the hospitalities.

Now it is worth while pausing to ask if there could be a more delightful enterprise than this — to leave Charing Cross pier by river on a fine Sunday morning in full summer in order to meet at a moated grange and discuss its furniture and its garden, on both of which unlimited money belonging to some one else is to be spent? No wonder every one was happy. Mr. Ingleside was happy because his guests were happy. Alison was happy because it was all

so interesting. Ann was happy because it was her weekly holiday, and she was only eighteen. Miss Muirhead was happy because she had just succeeded in buying for Marltye a perfect set of full-grown chessmen in yew from an old garden in Gloucestershire which was being demolished, and this was more than Mr. Thayer would dare to expect even for all his six blank cheques rolled together. Dr. Staminer was happy because he was doing such a novel thing under such pleasant conditions. Richard Oast was happy because it was a fine day and his boat was doing its duty. Timbs was happy because the *Caprice's* engine was running so well. So much for the boat-load. As for the others, Henry Thrace was happy because that was his nature. Mrs. Campion was happy because she liked everybody in the party and liked Mr. Ingleside most. Vycount Ramer was happy because he was in the country and was to be well paid for it. John was happy because he was visibly in a position of authority. Leslie was happy because he was a born decorator and Marltye was so attractive a subject to work upon. And the Whittakers, the caretakers, were happy because all the chimneys of the house once more were emitting smoke, and it looked like an earnest of occupation again; for no gardener really likes it when his employers are away, howsoever he may abuse their freakishness and unreason at the village inn.

The *Caprice* and its crew drew every eye on the voyage to Weybridge, while the little boys on the bridges paid them the usual compliments of little boys on bridges, but such was the boat's speed that these

always miscarried. They had left Charing Cross pier at nine, before anyone was about; they dashed by Richard Oast's works, where the *Caprice* was born, only half an hour later; and were off that charming row of old gay houses just east of Kew Bridge by ten, as the tide was with them. And so under the new bridge, and past the minaret chimney, and between the Gardens on the one side and the flat grey meadows of Sion House, and past sombre Isleworth, to Richmond, with its shaggy hill and the terraces of the Star and Garter rising almost as though they were on the Riviera.

Richmond drew from Dr. Staminer reminiscences of his early days when a walk from London through its park was a regular Sunday excursion, dropping down to a little inn at Ham for lunch; while Pope's villa on the other side of Twickenham Ferry drew a few couplets from Mr. Ingleside, who knew the *Epistles* and *Satires* by heart. And so on to Kingston's busy waters, where the first real signs of the Sunday holiday were noticeable. And then round Hampton Court's park to the Court itself, more Tudor far than the Tudor destination they were bound for. Here Miss Muirhead insisted on landing in order to glance for a moment at the famous herbaceous border under the great wall; but she was allowed only ten minutes, and again the engine throbbed, past Hampton village to Sunbury, where they lost another ten minutes in the lock.

As they proceeded higher and the hour grew later the boats began to be more numerous: spotless punters emerged, dressed like fashion plates; river

girls with sunshades and novels and terriers; anglers on cane-bottomed chairs, in boats moored to poles; here and there an outrigger; here and there a launch. And always the green banks, always the wondering cattle.

And so after passing Walton and Shepperton they steered southwards down the tributary Wey to the point where Leslie was waiting with a wagonette.

And then came the new excitement of driving through the country to a place one has never visited before: the speculation as to what it will be like; the wondering if those are its chimneys, or those, and what the next bend in the road will unfold. Oh, the bends in the English roads!

Marltye at last, and there was Mrs. Campion all smiles and John all importance, and lunch would be ready in half an hour. Ramer they found at his easel in the garden with something uncommonly like a proprietary expression on his face. "A little bit of all right," he said: "Brother Jonathan's in luck."

During the interval Leslie lectured to them illuminatingly on the exterior of Marltye. He drew their attention to the smallness of the bricks and the increased effect of charm which they possessed. He remarked upon how simple a thing it was to build a chimney diamond shape instead of square with the house, and how much more decorative and pleasing was the result. "A few white pigeons on the roof, and the place is perfect," he said. Then he led them through the rooms.

"What I particularly like about this commission,"

said Leslie, "is that it comes from an American millionaire with no nonsense. He has money and he spends it. All my clients lately have been wealthy men who affect to be Socialists. There is nothing that these fellows won't spend on the luxuriousness and efficiency of their places while they are getting ready to do the right thing with their money. They order the very latest thing in electric fittings and at the same time ask me as a friend if I can advise them as to the kind of communistic settlement that is most in need of endowment. They keep eight gardeners and two cars, and run up to town to hear and cheer Sidney Webb on the nationalization of property. They never see the incongruity. 'It is necessary for the proper development of my ameliorative projects,' they say, 'that I should be above worry and discomfort.' And their docility in the name of art! There's a Socialist plutocrat I visited the other day whose architect is one of those cranks who allow no pictures. The walls of his rooms are so beautifully proportioned and washed that any alien body, such as a Corot or a Matthew Maris, would strike a discordant note—would be, in short, an impertinence. So here was my Crœsus, sitting in bare rooms, with attics full of Barbizon masterpieces! He too was meditating upon the right way to do good with his money, while a fountain was playing in the grounds to the tune of ten pounds a day.

"Now there's nothing of that about our Yankee. What he says is: 'Miss Muirhead, make me the most beautiful garden that money can buy.' 'Mr. Leslie, furnish my house as well as it can be fur-

nished; expense no object.' That's what I call sound. He shall have both. I ask you"—for this long harangue came at the end of lunch—"I ask you to raise your glasses to Mr. Clarence Thayer, the prince of neo-Elizabethans."

They all drank the health, but Dr. Staminer begged leave to add an amendment. "I am drinking," he said, "not only to the best of neo-Elizabethans, but also to the most foolish."

"Treason," said Mr. Ingleside.

"Yes," said Dr. Staminer, "the most foolish. I don't know how Mr. Thayer spends his time—presumably on Wall Street or in the Pit, making corners—but it is perfectly clear that already he has money enough; and how a man who has money enough can go on making more, and allow a foreigner like Leslie here to have all the joy of amassing Chippendale and Heppelwhite, blue china and old oak, beats my imagination. I cannot follow him. None the less, his health."

"What troubles me about Mr. Thayer," said Miss Muirhead, "is that I'm afraid he'll spoil the country people. He's one of those rich men who throw their money about and are in danger, with the best intentions in the world, of becoming wreckers. I've seen a good deal of it: in fact, it's the spot on my business. A rich man buys an estate, and very likely evicts a dozen cottagers or so as a start; pulls down their homes; and begins to build his house and make his garden. The wretched evicted people very likely have to settle in a town, especially if he is transforming a farm into a park and pleasure grounds;

while those that remain are turned from simple farm labourers into feudal retainers. Independence goes. His wife very likely takes up patronage as a hobby, to kill time; every one is spoiled; greed creeps in. Surrey of course is naturally so full of this kind of thing that I need not worry very much about Marltye; but it is dreadful to see it breaking out in the really independent counties."

"You are quite right," said Richard Oast. "There is no public nuisance much worse than the rich men whose money makes other people discontented. It is a bad day for almost every one when he grows richer; but it is worse for a poor man than any. The evil done by good men is always the most subtly mischievous; and of all evil, that which proceeds from easy, unthinking generosity is probably most dangerous in country places. But the last thing that rich people will learn is how to be generous wisely."

"Oh, that'll do," said Mr. Ingleside. "I'm quite sure you're right, and I'm quite sure your own generosity is not always dictated by wisdom. This is a kind of talk that leads nowhere. Let's look at the garden."

Miss Muirhead led the older members of the party about the grounds and discoursed on her theory of arrangement—how the bowling-alley was to be here and the chess-men there; where the terraces and the fishpond; and so forth. Mr. Ingleside implored her to have a space somewhere for a Japanese sand lawn. "You plant the edges with silver birches," he said, "and then you watch their exquisite shadows creep

over the sand. No one ever walks on it; it is just a material for light and shade."

But Miss Muirhead said that the blank cheques were for a Tudor garden and a Tudor garden only.

Leslie gave Ann a pencil and a notebook, and they went from room to room taking measurements and provisionally choosing colours; while John took charge of Alison and led her all over the estate.

"I'm very strict about time," he said. "I take no liberties with the clock myself, and I don't allow my men any. There is a time sheet that they all have to sign. I sign it too, just as a matter of example, when I am here."

Alison asked him how often he came down.

"Twice a week," said John: "on Tuesday evening for Wednesday, and Friday evening for Saturday. That's all that Miss Muirhead requires. You see I have a very good foreman, a capital fellow. In fact, they're all very decent fellows. There's nothing they wouldn't do for me. I had no idea I had such a way with workmen. I'm a born overseer, I find."

"Most of us are," Alison said.

John looked at her a little suspiciously. "Far from it," he said: "it is a very rare gift. Most men excite animosity in their employees, but here we're a perfect happy family."

Alison asked him what he did with his days there.

"Well," he said, "I have to fill in Miss Muirhead's blank maps, so that she can see what has been done, and write her a letter about it all, and post them. And of course general supervision, you know."

Alison said that she hoped he was not overworking himself.

"I try not to," he said; "but I always get so keen on what I am doing that it's a great snare. I've no doubt I shall break down some day, and have to travel. Unless," he added, with a glance at her, which, however, she did not notice, "I have some one to look after me and keep me from being foolish."

"Yes," said Alison, "I suppose most men want that. They talk of independence, but they love to be dependent."

"On the contrary," said John, "it would not interfere with my independence. I believe in wives doing something too. Why don't you learn to be a gardener, like Miss Muirhead?"

"No," said Alison. "She has suggested it to me, but I don't care about it. It does not appeal to me."

"There's money in it," said John. "Look at Miss Muirhead: she's rolling. I should think again if I were you."

They came back to the moat, and John told her that there were some very decent fish in it. He said that one day when there was nothing to do he had caught a lot. "Of course I throw them all back," he added.

"But doesn't it hurt them to be hooked and then have the hook torn out again?" Alison asked.

"Great Scott, no!" he said. "They adore it. I've caught one eight times."

And so the day wore on until it was time to return to the *Caprice* and to London.

"To-morrow," said Leslie, as he wished them good-

bye, "to-morrow I begin in earnest. First the builders and carpenters, then the decorators, and then the great hunt for furniture."

"Happy man!" said Dr. Staminer.

As for Alison and Ann and the gardening, they both remained firm.

Miss Muirhead laid stress on the interest there is in making paradises out of wildernesses, and she showed them some fascinating coloured books — Humphry Repton's and others — with agricultural scenes on which were movable slips, which being lifted up disclosed gentlemen's places: mansions, drives, lawns, and lakes, where had been nothing but arable land. She also discoursed upon the charm of the great florists: what nice men they were, at any rate the older members of the firms, for the most part the founders. "Their sons," she added, "are not so good, naturally; for whereas the fathers came from the soil, the sons come from the universities. But no florist can be a bad man. Think," she said, "of making a new purple!"

But the girls were obdurate. That was not the life they had in mind, and they would not give way.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN WHICH JOHN PERMANENTLY RENOUNCES THE SEX

MR. INGLESIDE sank into Mrs. Campion's most comfortable chair.

"He is here," he said.

"Who is here?" Mrs. Campion asked.

"Alison's lover. Who else could it be?"

"I didn't know she had a lover," said Mrs. Campion.

"Of course she has," said Mr. Ingleside. "Since she is twenty-one and my daughter whom I have hardly ever seen, of course she has a lover."

"I hope you like him," Mrs. Campion replied.

"He seems to me harmless," said Mr. Ingleside. "He has no money and a nice face. He treats me with profound respect bordering on fear; but I hear high enough spirits going on when the door is shut. But like him? What did you consider my attitude to him was likely to be? It isn't even as if he could afford to give me good cigars."

"But if he has no money . . ." Mrs. Campion began.

"That's only at present," said Mr. Ingleside. "He has a very wealthy aunt who will probably make

him comfortable. At present he is an officer on the O. & P., but he is shortly to settle down and find something on land."

"Like John," said Mrs. Campion.

"Yes, like John — except that this young man means it. He has got his Alison; he will now get his post."

"Then you have given your consent?"

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, "what is one to do? I don't see that I have any real say in this matter. Here is a nice, sensible girl of twenty-one who has no home but my bachelor rooms, and she lets herself be fallen in love with by a quite nice and capable young man on a long voyage."

"Of course," said Mrs. Campion. "Long voyages ——"

"And at a time, too," Mr. Ingleside continued, "when her heart was lonely and bruised. That's when it began. Then he went out to Japan again and found it was only too real, and so directly he returned he saw her and called on me. But that's nothing to do with it. She falls in love and naturally wants to be married. Is it reasonable that I, who hardly know her — who simply happen years ago to have become her father, and have no real place for her in my life now and never have had — is it likely I am going suddenly to assume parental rights and say no? Besides, supposing I did, what then? They would marry just the same."

"Of course they would," said Mrs. Campion.

"Probably from your house," Mr. Ingleside rejoined. "I see you naturally befriending all young lovers

against their elders. Very well, then," he continued, "I say yes. I should no doubt have added something about their taking time and so forth. But why? A girl who is going to be married is no real use to anyone else. She would merely be an excrescence in our strictly celibate abode. All my friends are celibate. You see my hand has been forced. The day is with the young: my time is over. I am a back number. I sit on a shelf and bleat out, 'Yes, my children. Bless you! May you be happy!'"

"Don't be so bitter," Mrs. Campion said. "You have no right to be, either. You were young once: you can't have it all again."

"True," said Mr. Ingleside, "but that does not prevent one from regrets. But anyway," he continued, "I am bored by all this marrying. I like Alison, and I want her at home. But even if she were not my daughter I should be bored by it. I think, and shall think, that a frank unmarried girl with many interests and quick sympathies is a great deal more interesting than a married woman of the same age. Unmarried and unattached she is a companion; married she is a monopoly. Her mind goes: she becomes merely a reflection or extension of her husband. In place of her wide interests she concentrates on petty housekeeping affairs and worries and the well-being of her capturer and conqueror. It is no doubt all right for him, who has his slave at last; and for her, who has her idol at last (these being the two things that men and women want); and no doubt it is all right for Nature, who has brought together another couple at last; but for

every one else it is ridiculous. Society may gain a baby, but it has lost a charming presence."

Mrs. Campion laughed. "You are horribly anti-social," she said. "Your critical fastidiousness is uncanny and I am sure wicked. I can't think why I like you. And you talk, too," she continued, "as if married women had no kind of intelligence and attraction at all."

"Not a bit of it," said Mr. Ingleside. "I was referring only to happy wives. It is they who are such a loss. Unhappy wives can be excellent company."

"Well," said Mrs. Campion, "I shall ask Alison to bring him here. What is his name?"

"His name is Bryan Hearne," said Mr. Ingleside. "Ann seems to have met his aunt in the course of her commercial avocations—Miss Larpent; rather a rum 'un, I think, but sound as a bell. Thank Heaven, I shall have Ann. Ann shows no signs of capitulating, and she is too young, too. I look to Ann to lead my tottering footsteps to the Queen's Hall on a Saturday afternoon for many years to come."

"Or one of Alison's daughters?" Mrs. Campion suggested.

"How terribly you talk!" said Mr. Ingleside. "Grandchildren! Had I thought of that I believe I should have said no instantly."

"Would you also deny Alison the joy of being a mother?" Mrs. Campion asked.

"I wasn't thinking of that," said Mr. Ingleside. "I was thinking of my own feelings as a grandfather."

"Preferential treatment once more," said Mrs. Campion. "But you were very nice to Alison about it all, I'm sure," she added.

"I hope so," said her father.

"Dear girl, I'm so glad. I'm sure she hugged you."

"Yes, she did. But you don't seriously expect me to get any satisfaction out of a hug given to me because I had made it easy for her to leave me for ever and live with this man?"

"Why must you analyze?"

"Analyze! I hope I am too old to attempt to analyze the meaning of a daughter's hugs; but I do protest against being asked to look upon such a sign of complete self-satisfaction as an expression of affection for me."

"Oh, dear," said Mrs. Campion, "we shall never agree."

"Of course we shan't," said Mr. Ingleside. "We don't talk each other's language, or think each other's thoughts, or follow the same system of logic. How can we agree? But we can do something much better: we can be very good friends."

John returned home that evening in excellent humour. "There was a little difficulty among the men to-day," he said, "but I settled it very quickly. All it needed was a strong hand. Really, mother, I wish you could see me as an overseer: you would understand me better. I think of advertising in the *Times* for a post as general supervisor of any large operations."

After dinner he prepared to go out. "Good-

night," he said; "I shall probably be late. I'm going round to the Inglesides'. I want to arrange with Alison about taking her to Brooklands."

"Very well," said Mrs. Campion, "but she probably won't be so keen about it as she used to be."

"Why not?"

"Because she's engaged."

"Engaged! What do you mean?"

"Engaged to be married."

John looked at his mother in disgusted amazement.

"Not really!" he said. "How perfectly rotten. Who is the man?"

"An officer on the ship that brought her back from Japan."

"As long ago as that!" he said. "What cats women are! And to let me take her about as I have done! Well, I'm blessed!" He raged up and down the room for a while. "All right," he began again, "I give up women from this moment. Do you hear, mother? I give them up. Good-night."

"But where are you going?" Mrs. Campion asked. "Not to the Inglesides' now?"

"Great Heaven, no! I'm going to walk about. This wants thinking over."

"My dear boy, you don't pretend you were in love with Alison yourself?" said Mrs. Campion.

"No, not exactly," said John. "But I was thinking of being. I thought women could see things like that."

"Perhaps she could," said Mrs. Campion; "but

it doesn't follow that she would necessarily approve or reciprocate."

"Well," said John, "she's brought it on herself. A fishy sailor, too! What does she want with sailors? Wives in every port and all the rest of it."

"But he's going to leave the sea and get a post on land."

"Ha! that's a likely story! We know how difficult that is! Look at me! But what's the use of talking? I give her up. I give up all women. I shall probably emigrate. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN WHICH MR. BRYAN HEARNE APPEARS, AND A FATHER IS LEFT DUBIOUS

MR. BRYAN HEARNE had called on Mr. Ingleside at his office only a day or so before. It had not been the easiest of interviews. How could it be? With however bold a front he might view the angry Bay or the frenzied Mediterranean, the treacherous Gulf or the Roaring Forties, Mr. Bryan Hearne looked the picture of diffident humility as he stood in the room in Whitehall, hoping to leave it the richer by an affianced father-in-law.

He had reached the lobby of the office with a certain fund of determination; but in the laborious process of gaining admittance to Mr. Ingleside that had completely disappeared. No lover, however ardent, should go as a perfect stranger for so fateful an interview as this to a Government Department. The architects of such buildings leave no place for romance; the *personnel* equally exclude it. The final blow came when the exceedingly deliberate messenger between Mr. Ingleside and the world returned to know what was the nature of Mr. Bryan Hearne's business. He wrote "private and urgent," and again steeled himself to patience. As nearly as he was able, in his tender and gentle and forgiving

condition, he reproached the absent Alison for her refusal to speak first. But she had said nothing to her father yet. Mr. Bryan Hearne was a bolt from the bluest of skies.

"What can I do for you?" Mr. Ingleside asked.

The obvious reply was, "Give me your eldest daughter;" but Mr. Bryan Hearne was too shy and simple to say anything as telling as that—simple and telling and fluent, too, as he had been known to be in his intercourse with clumsy sailors.

"I wanted," he said at last, "to ask you about—about—marriage."

"Marriage?" Mr. Ingleside asked. "Marriage in general, or your own marriage?"

"My own marriage," said Mr. Hearne.

"Is it a failure?" Mr. Ingleside asked again.

"Oh no," Mr. Hearne hastily interposed. "You see, I'm not married yet. I—I want to be."

"Yes . . .?" said Mr. Ingleside.

This was an awful moment. Any reasonable parent with a marriageable girl ought to have divined the situation.

"I came to ask you, sir, if—if——"

"Yes?"

"If you would consent—but hasn't Miss Ingleside—hasn't Alison said a single word? I implored her. . . ."

"Oh," said Mr. Ingleside shortly. "This is a proposal. You are asking for my daughter?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Hearne, with a sigh of relief. "Yes."

"But do you know," said Mr. Ingleside, "that

she has only quite recently returned from a long voyage?"

"Of course," said Mr. Hearne, "that was how I met her. I am an officer on the boat."

"And it was you who were at Tilbury?"

"Yes."

"Ah," said Mr. Ingleside, "now I am beginning to understand things. You must excuse me for being so confused. You see, this is a subject which you have probably been more or less living with for some weeks, whereas I heard it first only three minutes ago. . . . It is very startling, almost revolutionary. . . . Alison, you must understand, has just returned to live with her sister and me; we were to see much of each other, for the first time; and you propose — a perfect stranger — to monopolize her and carry her off."

"Not monopolize her, I hope."

"My dear sir, of course you will monopolize her. There are no two ways in these matters. Until she is married she will live with me, eat my food, and think of you. After she is married she will not even be under my roof. That's true, isn't it?"

Mr. Hearne said that he feared it was. "But ——"

"But it can't be helped? It's the law of Nature, you mean?" Mr. Ingleside asked.

Mr. Hearne said that that was exactly what he had meant.

"Why do you want to marry?" Mr. Ingleside inquired.

Mr. Hearne thought it was because he loved.

"Can't you love and not marry?"

"It is of course possible," Mr. Hearne replied, "but why should we?" He added that he feared that waiting was not much in his line.

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside at last, "let me have the names of one or two persons to whom to write to about you — and tell me something about your affairs; and I will talk to Alison. I don't pretend to say that this interview has made me happy; but I admit that it probably was bound to come. You will hear from me very soon."

Mr. Ingleside sent a message to say that he should not be home to lunch. Instead he bought some fruit, and taking his seat in the *Caprice*, told Timbs to go to Greenwich.

He was not happy; but it soothed him to watch the water and the wharves. There is no scene of beguilement so certain as a river. Mr. Ingleside was thinking about his life: Arnold's lines, so often in his mind, fitted themselves to the throb of the *Caprice's* engine —

> "Yes! in the sea of life enisled.
> We million mortals live alone."

It had been his lament for years — it stood almost at the head of his long and ever-lengthening indictment of Fate. He found that he had never liked — he did not dare to say loved — Alison so much. She was threatened, and he wanted her. Cause and effect. He laughed at the irony of his discovery. . . .

And this young Hearne. Was he a philopro-

genitive? He hoped so. Marriage should be confined to such. Alison was, he was sure, but of Ann he was doubtful. . . . Hearne had looked a candid and simple fellow. None of your damned modern sophistication about him. . . .

Mr. Ingleside looked up and found a huge vessel was being moored. The first officer was standing like a statue on the peak, only his eyes moving as he watched the cables shortening. Sailors were running about. The captain was smoking calmly on the bridge, talking with the pilot.

"And that young fellow," thought Mr. Ingleside, "is going to leave this fine life to marry Alison and settle down." It vexed him. It seemed a poor exchange. . . . "Dear girl," he murmured, "poor girl. . . ."

"Alison," he said that evening, stroking her head, "Alison, why do you want to leave me so soon?"

"Oh, I don't," she said, her eyes filling with tears.

"And yet you do," her father rejoined.

Alison cried quietly for a little while. Mr. Ingleside said nothing: he had nothing to say. What has a tired man, who has failed to keep his promises and does not believe, to say to a young girl in love?

"And you liked him?" Alison asked at last.

"I liked him immensely," said her father. "Write and ask him to dine here to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN WHICH VARIOUS PERSONS RECEIVE THE GREAT NEWS

"WELL, Alison," said Richard Oast, "I am glad to hear you are engaged. I like early marriages. I was married when I was only twenty, and I never regretted it, nor, I believe, did my wife. No nation that grows calculating about marriage is ever on the up-grade.

"If Hearne is really leaving the sea, as your father tells me, and looking for something on land, I think I might be able to help him. But don't let that worry you, anyway. If you both want to be married soon, be married. I get out of patience when I see young people going on year after year betrothed to each other and not daring to marry 'until William has a clear three hundred per ann.!' Why, he'd have twice that sum if he married. I married on eighteen shillings a week, and so far from marriage adding to expenses, it halved them. It's only travel that adds to a married man's expenses: that is, if he marries the right woman.

"There's not enough happy fatalism in these days: we're all so cautious and far-seeing. The best advice anyone ever gave in this England of ours was Sydney Smith's when he told a depressed friend to 'take

short views.' You marry directly Hearne comes back from his next voyage, my dear, and you'll never regret it. Cut the engagement as short as possible."

Christie heard the news with a distress that he had difficulty in concealing, and he left early to think it over. But his grief was not very long-lived, for the next morning brought the catalogue of a sale of water-colours which contained three or four examples that he greatly desired, and he therefore withdrew from the bank the nest-egg which had been accumulating there against possible matrimonial needs, and made arrangements with a little dealer to bid for the treasures: and in the excitement of these proceedings he resumed his normal state of cheerfulness. Never waste your pity on a collector.

Henry Thrace was rather pathetic. He had been so fond of so many nice girls whom he had known since children and then had seen fall into the possession of assertive young men. It was his destiny, he knew, but he could not refrain from a certain wistfulness and sense of loss. Alison had been perhaps his favourite of all; and now she too had found the real thing. He, he always felt — always knew in his heart — was only the imitation. So must our old and faithful dogs feel when the new puppy enters the house and gets all the titbits. But Henry was a brave and good man whose dominant principle in life was to make the best of things; and he held Alison's hand and wished her the happiest of lives with Bryan, while his poor eyes swam.

Vycount Ramer was less reserved. "Why, Ali-

son," he said, "this is a shame. Here have I been spending hours over my toilet on Fridays, hoping you would notice me, and all in vain. The money that's gone on plumage. The male bird, you know. It's lucky I'm not a dressy man, or I should be broke. As it is, I almost had my trousers creased. And what's the result? A young fellow comes along all over tar and seaweed, and you jump into his arms.

"The artists' sun has set. The early eighteen-eighties: those were our days. We wore black velvet and had our admirers. But now we dress like tramps, cut our hair short, and are married only to our pipes. We are, in fact, under a cloud everywhere. Even the letters R.A. have lost their power, and to elect an artist to that honour to-day is to distort his face with spasms. What did for us, I'm not sure; but very largely the Kodak and W. P. Frith's autobiography."

"Well," said Mrs. Boody, who had never been quite sure of Alison's complete innocuousness as an elder daughter, and was now put for ever at ease, "well, Miss Alison, I hope you'll be happy; and indeed I think you will, for Mr. Hearne has the face of a true lover, and not one of the selfish ones who think of themselves first and their wives next. I know what I'm talking about, Heaven knows. Of course I've done my little bit of wondering in the kitchen, like the rest of us, with all those unmarried gentlemen so thick in the house on Friday nights. And I've noticed a change or two lately. Mr. Christie has been getting much more the dandy, and Mr. Ramer has cut the mustard and cress off of his cuffs

in a way he never used to do. At one time, indeed, I thought that Mr. Christie might be the happy man; but I'm glad you chose elsewhere. He's as nice-spoken a gentleman as one could wish, and always has a little joke with me, but I don't see him as a husband. Not the lasting kind that Mr. Hearne will be. Mr. Hearne! He makes me sorry I refused an offer I had when I was in my first place, from a sailor on the *Arethusa*. If ever I married again, I'd go to the sea, like you, Miss. They have such straight eyes and nice colouring, and a comfortable don't-care-a-damnishness (if you'll forgive me the expression; but listening to your pa's taught me such bold words) that means a lot to us poor women."

Ann was perhaps the least sympathetic. "You are in a hurry," she said. "I hope I shan't marry till I'm older than that. There are so many things to do first, and one never does anything after one's married."

"But if you love," said Alison, "those other things either don't matter, or you don't want to do them alone any more."

But Ann was only just eighteen.

She made the same remark to Dr. Staminer that evening when he asked her what she thought of it all.

"Yes," he said, "I know what you feel. You want to go your own way as long as possible."

"Of course," said Ann. "We are here only once; it is so absurd not to do what one wants to."

"I know," said the doctor kindly, "I know. Of course one wants that. But between going your own way absolutely, and falling in with other people's,

do you think there's such a tremendous gulf? Would you be surprised to hear that the difference between always having a good time and not always having a good time is extraordinarily small? You would, of course, yet it's true; but it's a thing you can't believe at your age. A little kissing of the rod makes everything sweeter."

CHAPTER XXXV

IN WHICH WE MEET WITH TRUE ROMANCE

IT was a Friday evening, and novels were under discussion. No topic is so certain of a successful run, no matter where it is started, whether among friends or strangers. Indeed, no topic probably has turned so many strangers into friends, since a community of taste in stories, and, above all, in characters, is a community of taste in life, and that is the basis of intimacy. Never believe the people who feel assured of the happiness of a new marriage because the husband and wife are so different and like different things. Happy they may be, but it will not be because of that, but in spite of it.

Novels were again under discussion. "I don't hold with novels that make you miserable: hardly indeed with those that make you think," Mr. Ingleside had said: "at any rate not with those that consciously propose to make you think. I even have a theory that novels should not be true to life at all."

"Not true to life!" The exclamation was almost general.

"No, not true to life," Mr. Ingleside repeated. "If ever I should take to writing stories (and the contingency is not possible) they should be stories not

of life as I know it, but of life as I wish it was. That is the story-teller's opportunity and privilege: to invent a better state of things than he lives in. That is his real reward for his trouble: not the money, but the pleasure it gives him to escape for a while from facts. And after his own escape comes his readers'. The book is their chance too."

"Then you shut out the realists altogether?" some one asked.

"Certainly," said Mr. Ingleside. "It is partly because of the impossibility of being a realist, at any rate in England,— and I expect everywhere, in any language,— that I have come to these conclusions. Obviously no English novelist can be more than partly a realist: and a partial realist, a realist who has to leave out the truly important things, is more misleading than an out-and-out idealist. Don't you see? No, there is too much talk about the mission of the novel. The novel has no mission but to provide an escape. The other books — the turgid tracts on public questions, the stories with a purpose — are not novels at all, and it is time that a new name were given to them. They are all right, but they should declare themselves. They have no right to pretend to be honest, genial romances, and all the time want your blood — that is, your improvement. There is a limit to the masquerades in which the preacher is entitled to appear; when he affects to be a novelist, the imprint of his cloven hoof ought to be on the title page."

Richard Oast came in as Mr. Ingleside was finishing his remarks. "I quite agree," he said. "When

one is out for pleasure, of course one wants lies. And the novel-reader is surely out for pleasure. Just take my walk here this evening. I leave at nine o'clock. I walk along Piccadilly, and see the old familiar dreadful sight. I turn down Leicester Square, and am confronted by a huge building large enough for the offices of a Government Department, belonging to — what? What, in the name of Christianity and Civilization? The National — National, mark! — the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to ——? I again ask, what? To donkeys? To horses? To dogs? To politicians? No, to children. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I had never noticed it till to-day. Big enough to govern New Zealand in. And then past the grimy picture postcards, the anti-social chemists, of Green Street and Villiers Street, I come to you, and the realists expect me to welcome the books and plays in which they are going to give an artificial reproduction of all this squalor and ugliness. I tell you I am sick of facts. The world as it is disgusts me: I want, as often as I can get it, the world as it is not.

"I shall put this case of the N.S.P.C.C. to my friend Canon Crosskeys," he added, "to-morrow; but what's the use? He'll only hide, as he always does when I take him a real corker, behind that text about babes and sucklings. 'Oh, well,' I always say, 'if you like to take refuge in irony . . .!' and that makes him furious. According to my reading of the Evangel, it is full of irony, but the Church always denies it; the Church can't bear to allow

Christ so much modern ability as that. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' What is that if it's not irony? Obviously it is not true in the surface sense of it. But how true otherwise — for the meek to inherit the earth! We see them doing it every day; it is all that the peasants of England can hope for, their inheritance of earth, a piece seven feet by three."

It was then that Henry Thrace joined in. "I agree with both of you," he said. "I certainly want no parade of facts when I read a story. As Oast says, there are facts all round us; do we want to find them again when we have taken our boots off and lit our pipes? That was why I so rejoiced in poor Ouida, twenty and more years ago. Ouida made no such foolish error. Ouida had the right instinct. She transported us to a new world — not better than this, but utterly different, and not the less strange because some of its features were familiar."

"There is no Ouida now," he added. "There are women novelists, Heaven knows, but they are either historians of normal life, and clever enough, I'll admit, or they have missions and the *tête montée*."

It was then that the young man whom Vycount Ramer had brought said something.

"Do you know Mrs. Ros?" he asked quietly.

Henry Thrace did not know her; no one knew her.

"Then you are all to be envied," said he. "Mrs. Ros does most of the things that you seem to require in a novelist. The life she describes will never

disconcert you by reminding you of your own. She is a born novelist — that is to say, you can't skip her; you have to watch her all the time; she makes you laugh; and you are wild to know what happens."

The company were greatly interested. "As a matter of fact," continued the young man, "I belong to a Ros Society. We used to meet together to read and study her. My rooms are quite close; if you'll allow me, I'll fetch her masterpiece," and off he went.

The young man on returning pulled a volume from his pocket, and read as follows: —

"When the eve at last arrived that she should say farewell to the little room that had grown so familiar to her, and in which she had passed many a bright half-hour in company with Lord Gifford, she felt quite overcome, as she gave the last finishing stitches to the cambric cover she so patiently had been endeavouring, for two days previous, to make her masterpiece of design. A lengthened sigh followed, and ere its echo died against the walls of steel-grey tint, with sprigs of lilac shooting forth here and there to relieve its dull sameness, the door was quietly opened, and Lord Gifford entered. His keen black eye, surrounded with rings of swollen sorrow, soon penetrated her heart, as she sat with her work only finished, two corners of which were laden with Nature's dew.

"'My darling virgin! my queen! my Delina! I am just in time to hear the toll of a parting bell strike its heavy weight of appalling softness against the weakest fibres of a heart of love, arousing and tickling its dormant action, thrusting the dart of evident separation deeper into its tubes of tenderness, and fanning the flame, already unextinguishable, into volumes of burning blaze.'

"Throwing his arms around her neck, Lord Gifford

allowed tears of great tenderness to further damp her efforts of success. For a time sobs were only heard issue, until the gravity of her position pointed to speedy removal.

"'Lord Gifford,' she said, 'I must go. I have already told you your mother has appointed me to teach in the village school; and as this is my last evening at Columba Castle, I felt sorry leaving my little room, that has so often buried words of sweetest encouragement underneath its gilded roof of artful azure.'

"Covering his eyes with his hands, Lord Gifford sobbed aloud, and it was only when Delina insisted on going he found words to reply.

"'Must you at last leave my home, Delina, my darling?'

"'Oh, I must, Lord Gifford, I must.'

"'Ah, then, this is only, I trust, a slight bruise my hopes have experienced, a slim stroke of momentary pain that can at any moment be obliterated, and the page of silent disappointment made a folio of virgin beauty.'

"Rising to her feet, Delina shook the crumpled folds of her worn alpaca, tied her chestnut locks, that hung in wavy loveliness over her well-formed shoulders, more firmly; donned her little white sailor hat, whose flimsy blue band had often before been pronounced brighter in colour; drew her greyish gloves over her snowy hands; then, with a heavy dullness dangling about her eyes, she cast one final look around the room to offer a long farewell to its plain yet lovely corners. Extending one hand to Lord Gifford, she felt speech had fled; and, tightly grasping the extended tribute of friendship, he slowly rose as Lady Gifford entered.

"'Well, Delina,' said she, while a fierce look stole from her angry eyes, 'I hope you will get along nicely at your new duty, which you will kindly attend on Monday.'

"Borrowing instant courage, with Lord Gifford in the background stifling his ire as well as his sobs, she replied —

"'I trust I shall, thank your ladyship,' and, bowing lowly, left the room.

"Lady Gifford couldn't fail perceiving the disappointment that lingered on the face of her son as Delina went from

their midst. Without further remark, Lady Gifford quitted the room.

"As Delina's hurried steps spake farewell with a crackling speechlessness to the pebbled avenue on which she so often trod, the blackening ball of sorrow rose within her heaving breast, and, as its invisible body clambered to the narrow summit, it burst asunder with a sickening sound, scattering its dying echo around the misty hedgeway along which she passed. She heard not the sound, she felt not the force of her tread, her sorrow was so illimitable.

"Lord Gifford, clinging to the vacant room in the horrors of sorrow — how those deep black eyes, laden with Nature's dewdrops, shone like an unsheathed sword, flashing their angry sheen first on one object then on another, then yielded to the dart of blindness, as he fixed them on the vacant chair on whose stout seat Delina had so often reclined.

"Bathing his silken handkerchief with tears, he muttered, 'I'm a bloody fool, in fact one of Nature's asses, to allow my thoughts to master me in such a fashion.'"

"That's the real thing, isn't it?" the young man inquired, as he closed the book.

"It is indeed," said Mr. Ingleside. "Henry, what do you say?"

"Great," said Henry. "I must have that book. I shall never be lonely again."

"Please read some more," said Ann.

"Yes. Find another plum," said Dr. Staminer.

"Plums!" said the young man, "she's like a Christmas pudding, she's full of them. You don't have to find them: they jump at you. Listen, then.

"Of the want of charms in literary men—

'Mr. John Nougher, the head teacher, a man of about fifty, who shared only slightly in the few prominent charms attached to men of literary standing.'

"Of autumnal tints —

'He had concealed himself for some time before her arrival behind an old beech tree thickly populated with leaves, and apparently (to an outsider of the woody world) bathed in the grapes' bloody juice.'

"Of forgetfulness —

'Turning to Delina, he said, "Delina darling, I feel extremely grieved at what has happened, and trust you will allow these words to glide into buried notice."

'And for his sake so she did."

"Of a lifelike statue —

'The first white-gowned statue of stationary deadness was that of Lord Gifford's late father. On it the sculptor's handicraft defied comment. So naturally formed did it seem that all it required to convince the severest critic of its noble representative's animation was a breath of Divine Omnipotence blown on his bald north.'

"Of shame —

'Then he breathed, sighed heavily, inwardly saying again, "Come, courage, come! Heaven help me, else I dwindle into the puddle of shame, and damp not only my feet, but, alas! my whole body."'

"Of ecstatic love —

'Lord Gifford, courting defeat, apparently with a careless look, suddenly clasped her to his heaving breast. "My precious darling!" he excitedly exclaimed. "A moment of bliss has at last crossed my path, that seems constantly paved with lofty looks of unpardonable pride."

'"I hardly understand you, Lord Gifford," said Delina, while her head rested on his breast.'

"Of Lady Mattie —

'"Her long, yellow hands, thin beyond detail, she mostly keeps powdered and jewelled with rings of every shape and form. Then her features!" Lord Gifford here lit a cigar, and, with a painful distortion of his face, said in a deep, sullen tone: "Enough — enough. But, Lord, how sharp!"'

"Of plighted troth —

'Dazzled with the brilliant circlet, Delina could only thank him in silence, while tears of unbounded joy dropped from her fine grey eyes.

'Thus were promised in marriage two which private oath, parental objection would try strongly to break, or cause that wary imp, procrastination, to so extend its lengthy aid and solace to the heart of the wounded as to remove all stains of degradation contemplated by youthful decision, and transform them into marks of reasonable indelibility.'

"Of an ash tray —

'Lord Gifford sat burying in the silver receptacle that lay by his side the deadened ashes of feathery manufacture produced by the action of this thin lips.'

"Of a maternal welcome —

'"Home again, mother?" he boldly uttered, as he gazed reverently in her face.

'"Home to Hades!" returned the raging, high-bred daughter of distinguished effeminacy.'

"Of eyelids and a supplication —

'Then, raising her huge dark eyes towards heaven until hidden underneath their appointed protection, she prayed, in accents that threaten to vibrate against the starry ceiling until this day: "Heavenly Pater," she began, "listen to the words of a daughter of affliction, and chase, I pray Thee, instantly, the dismal perplexities that presently clog the filmy pores of her weary brain into the stream of trickling

nothingness. Bind their origin with cloth of coloured shame, and restore, Thou, her equilibrium with draughts of soothing good."'

"Of cutting a cigar —

'Longing for the surrender of a cigar to his lifey lips of action, Lord Gifford was soon seen destroying, by a necessary destructive, the butt-end of one.'

"Of a good woman's eye —

'. . . that eye in whose grey depths truth is the only foundation, and falsehood a blasted absentee.'

"Of early rising —

'A sharp, shrill ring was heard below; a convulsive jump, and Delina was standing at the window, peeping at the great broad steps that led to the outer door. Nothing was visible save these, laden with heavy raindrops; then a sudden bang, and Madam-de-Maine was announced.

'"A hellish bang, by dad!" said Lord Gifford, as he rose to make inquiry as to its cause. "Early on the move, quite early — aye," he growled, as he felt convinced his sheets were no more to be heated that day.'

"Who is Mrs. Ros?" Mr. Ingleside asked.

"She is an Irishwoman," said the young man. "There are two books to her name, but *Delina* is the best. I wish she'd write some more. Mrs. Ros would have many more devotees were it not for the difficulty of acquiring her books. I even know of a copy of *Delina Delaney* having been purloined from his host's shelves by a Prime Minister, who refused to give it up."

CHAPTER XXXVI

IN WHICH A LADY-LOVE IS TAKEN ROUND ON EXHIBITION

MR. BRYAN HEARNE at Buckingham Street was a very different man from Mr. Bryan Hearne in Whitehall. He manifested a sense of fun; he talked freely; he chaffed Ann; he got on excellently with Dr. Staminer, for whom he promised to get a number of Oriental curiosities on his next and last voyage; and he satisfied Mr. Ingleside that he had the makings of a thoughtful husband. Whatever might happen in the future, he seemed to be Alison's man at the moment, and no one can look farther ahead than that.

Bryan having been an only child and having lost his parents, Alison was spared the ordeal of steady acclimatization in his household: no small escape, for prospective fathers-in-law can so easily be too polite, and prospective mothers-in-law too affectionate or otherwise, and brothers and sisters too critical or astonished or amused. This, therefore, she missed, except in a modified form for one night only, as we shall see.

Bryan, however (like everybody else), had some very odd relations, and Alison had to be displayed to most of them.

First of all came the goose with the golden eggs — or Miss Larpent; and to her spotless mansion went also Ann, to whom the old lady had taken a strong fancy. Ann enjoyed the visit more than Alison did. For one thing, her early correspondence with the servants both outdoors and in seemed to place her on terms with them; and for another, she was less subject to her hostess's iron will. For Miss Larpent was so accustomed to direct and manage that she forced her nephew and Alison to live strictly to a time-table which she drew up for them, with prescribed visits to the neighbourhood in it. Ann was spared these duties, and was allowed, when Miss Larpent did not require her company, to roam where she would or read in the library. Every book in this discreet but not overworked apartment was bound in richly-tooled red leather, and most of them had the book-plate of Sir Pyke Larpent, K.C.B. There was not a book in the place that a gentleman, whether male or female, should not possess; nor was there one lacking which a gentleman ought to possess. Ann was at first rebuffed by so much sumptuous propriety, but chancing upon *Barchester Towers*, she settled down to be happy.

Meanwhile the two horses, perfectly controlled by Mr. Rigby, were conveying Alison, Bryan, and Miss Larpent to the great mansions of the neighbourhood.

Afterwards came the other uncles and aunts.

There were Uncle Hugh and Aunt Emily at Chislehurst, whose house was a miracle of suburban comfort, if not luxury. Both had always just enough

malady to keep them to a specially nourishing diet and particular care; but their illnesses were never so serious as to interfere with the gentler pleasures of life, which included a regular spell of cultured travel in Italy. Uncle Hugh was a book collector by post, and he marked a catalogue at every breakfast; Aunt Emily pampered a Pomeranian named "Snowy," read French novels purely for their psychology, and from the sanctuary of her sofa, with her feet up, in the security of wealth and decorum, sent out her sympathies to every variety of novelty and revolt.

"If you are one half so happy as I have been with Bryan's uncle," she said to Alison, "you will be fortunate. He has never denied me anything." And she believed it; but as a matter of fact he had never given her anything, except money for lavish housekeeping and the cushions that he did not want for himself.

"Of course," Aunt Emily continued, "some women would have liked children. But I have never felt their loss. My husband has been my child."

There was Bryan's Uncle Philip, the rural dean, at Imping, a widower, who spent a great part of every day in playing himself at croquet. They stayed with him one night, and he gave them his blessing; but he was exceedingly glad to see the village fly arrive to take them to the station the next morning. Not that he was inhospitable or selfish; but for young persons in love he had no natural enthusiasm.

"Since it has gone so far," said Uncle James, "I

suppose you will marry. But I wish you would wait another ten years or so. You will both know better then whether you really are suited or not. You know so little of each other now. I am not sure that in a perfect state anyone should marry but widows and widowers: but that, I fear, is something of a bull. You see, however, what I mean? One cannot tell whether or not one will be happy in the married state unless one has tried it."

"My dear," said Aunt Jane afterwards, when alone with Alison, "I hope Mr. Rawner's remarks have not made you wretched!"

"Oh no," said Alison. "I think that what Mr. Rawner says is very interesting. Only it does not seem to me very practical."

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Rawner; "you have said it. That is what I have always felt about some of Mr. Rawner's ideas; but I never could put it into words. They're not practical. But intensely interesting — oh yes."

Aunt Jane, however, even had she found words, would never have said them to her husband's face, having for him a worshipping adoration that had turned him from quite a decent young fellow to an opinionated oracle who would brook no interruption or dissent. Aunt Jane was also so active in waiting upon her lord, and so pervasive, that one thought of her more as a harem than one woman.

Uncle James was a scholar: an etymologist of great repute. He lived in luxury in an old and beautiful house in the Cotswolds, in the company of blue Persian cats and his wife. "And why marry

at all?" he went on. "You're not unhappy, Bryan? You're not unhappy, Miss Ingleside? You've both been quite contented hitherto? Then why marry? Think of all the troubles of life that are in store for you. Furniture. Drains. Servants. Cellars. I name these only. You laugh; but they are not laughable really. Only this morning my butler broke the cellar thermometer. I insist on his taking the temperature of the cellar three times every day — for the claret, you know — and it will now be Tuesday before a new thermometer can be obtained."

"But that might happen to a bachelor's butler," Bryan remarked.

Uncle James disregarded the interruption.

Uncle Victor and Aunt Maud were a less enervating couple. But their old-fashioned attitude to love was rather trying; for Uncle Victor never entered the room where Bryan and Alison were without first giving a loud warning cough, followed by a peal of knowing laughter; while Aunt Maud was always inventing pretexts to leave them together, remembering, as she said, how young couples like to be alone.

"Well, good-night," said Uncle Victor. "You won't mind, I'm sure, if I switch off the light." And he climbed the stairs chuckling.

"My dear," Aunt Maud said, "I hope that you will be sure to make your father see the clergyman who is to conduct the service and get him to make a few discreet omissions. So very outspoken and unnecessary, in my opinion. Far too primitive. So injurious to a nice spirit at a wedding."

Poor Aunt Maud, she had this matter very much at heart, her own wedding having been completely ruined by the dear Canon's bluntness; but the fact was that the request that he would edit this portion of the Prayer Book had been put to him by her elder sister with such refinements of delicacy that he had wholly missed the point.

But the worst ordeal was Seagrave House, because there were there not only an uncle and aunt, but cousins. The projection of a pair of lovers upon a youthful high-spirited family can lead to embarrassing flights of humour, especially when one of the pair is a total stranger. Why love is still so comic it would need a psychological essay to reveal; but the cynic might say that we hasten to think it comic lest we should see that it was tragic, as the philosopher made haste to laugh lest he wept. Be that as it may, to be in love is to be laughable in every normal English home. By the boys individually Alison was treated with some aloofness, as one who was, as they say at the exhibitions, *hors concours;* by the girls apart she was looked upon as a heroine and a curiosity to be studied — as one who had reached the desired haven; but by the family as a whole both she and Bryan were regarded with mirth and levity, and many giggling jokes were made.

The pleasantest visit was to Bryan's only sister, Mrs. Rivett, the mother of three children. After so much middle-aged and elderly self-protection and comfortable acceptance, Alison was very glad to be with these cheery mites on the threshold of life.

Prue, the eldest, was eight, and Sam, the youngest, four. Between came Bridget, aged six. They accepted Alison as an aunt instantly.

"I'm glad you're going to marry Uncle Bryan," said Prue, "but of course it's a pity in one way, because he won't be able to bring us any more nice things from abroad."

"But couldn't Aunt Alison go too?" said Bridget. "Captains have wives, don't they?"

"Captains' wives stop at home," said Prue, "and mind the baby."

"They don't always," said Bridget. "I know one that didn't."

"Who?" asked Alison, quite unprepared for Bridget's Biblical erudition.

"Noah's," said Bridget triumphantly.

"Very good," said Bryan. "I shall give you a new Noah's ark for a prize."

"Do take Aunt Alison with you," said Bridget, "and go on being a captain."

"I'm not a captain," said Bryan, "and I'm coming to live on land, like you and mother and father and Prue."

"Doesn't Sam live on land, then?" Bridget asked.

"Yes, and like Sam."

"Then why won't you live with us?" Bridget inquired. "The spare room's always empty."

On the night that she returned very happily to London — to Mr. Ingleside's great content — Alison received her first wedding present.

"I want to give you a wedding present," said Dr. Staminer, placing a parcel in her hands, "and yet,

since I am a collector and this is something out of my collection, I don't want to give it to you, so please take it quickly and hide it, or I shall ask for it back. It is a very sordid feeling, I admit; but if you also had the collector's temperament you would know that to give away anything is nearly an impossibility, and to give away anything without regretting it is quite an impossibility."

Alison knew the doctor fairly well, but his words placed her in a dilemma, for they were so evidently sincere.

"Dear doctor," she said, "please don't. . . . I would so much rather have something else. . . . Anything . . . something new that I could choose in a shop."

"No," said the doctor. "No. I want you to have this. It is good for you to have it, because it is very rare and wonderful; and good for me to give it, because I am an old pig. But for Heaven's sake don't look at it now!"

When Alison reached her room she opened the parcel. It was a Madonna in wood by Claus de Worde; the sweetest, gentlest most benignant understanding creature imaginable. Alison had many other gifts, but none so distinguished.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN WHICH OLD MRS. INGLESIDE GIVES HER BLESSING

ALISON in her turn took Bryan to Hove to see old Mrs. Ingleside. They drove out with her together, and afterwards Alison and her grandmother had an hour alone before dinner.

To Bryan she talked exclusively of foreign lands and travel. "You must have seen so many strange things. Flying-fish. Do they really fly? I stood by the rail the whole way to Calais on my first visit to France, hoping either for a flying-fish or a porpoise, but I never saw one.

"And whales. So immense. I should like to see a whale, but of course I never shall now. There's a skeleton head on the West Pier: wonderful.

"Wait a minute, Lassiter," Mrs. Ingleside called to the coachman. "There's the poor man I always give something to;" and the carriage stopped to permit an able-bodied wastrel to receive his gratuity and utter his too fulsome thanks. "Poor fellow," said the old lady, "such a sufferer, and so brave with it. I have several poor creatures I give a trifle to; and we shall come to my flower-woman directly.

"And now tell me all about icebergs," she said to Bryan, and was again instantly in full swing.

"I am glad that young man is going to leave the sea," said Mrs. Ingleside when Alison and she were alone. "It's a very treacherous element, my dear. So many wrecks. I sometimes shudder to look at it even from the security of the carriage as we drive along the Front. So cruel and cold. Yet I suppose the ships are warm, with those great funnels. But you would be very unhappy, my dear, every time the wind blew. I'm sure you would. And the long absences. Not that I should doubt Bryan for a moment: he looks to me as honest and true as the day; but long absences are a mistake. You might as well be single, my dear.

"He seems a nice young man, my dear, but I should like to know a little more as to what he is going to do when he leaves the sea. Don't let him be a lawyer. I'm sure we don't want any more lawyers, even although he would be a nice one. Mr. Meldrake is all right: I can trust him; and indeed where should I be if I could not? But don't let Bryan be one, I implore you. Use your influence, my dear; you'll never have more than you have now. You can do anything you like with a young man when he's in love with you."

"But, dear grandmamma," said Alison, "he has no notion of being a lawyer. It's far too late, too."

"I'm glad to hear it," said the old lady. "I dislike lawyers intensely. I have known several very objectionable ones. There was Mr. Diprose in the Old Jewry who deceived your grandfather so grossly, and after dining with us, too. The best sherry, I remember: something very special. And

Madeira afterwards. No one drinks Madeira any more, I'm told. A little heady, perhaps, but a perfect dessert wine, in my opinion.

"And don't let him be a doctor, my dear. A beautiful profession, no doubt; almost a sacred one; to heal — so touching, you know; but I always feel sorry for doctors' wives. No regularity possible: late meals, short and broken nights; the danger of infection. I'm told it's against the law for a doctor not to obey a summons; and think how unpleasant that would be, poor Bryan in the dock. And the delay of becoming a successful man. Think of all the expense of his course, beginning so late, and the anxiety of working up a practice. No, my dear, I don't think he'd better be a doctor.

"Nor a clergyman. I would not encourage that — not because I do not admire and esteem the clergy, but I don't like the idea of a young man leaving the sea for the Church. Not the right preparation, I'm sure. Sailors, my dear. So profane. Parrots, you know: one hears such dreadful things. The Church should be a call, I think, not a deliberate choice like that. And then again, the expense of the preliminaries: the examinations, so trying; Hebrew, I believe; Greek; the waiting for a curacy. And then the curacy itself. Vicars' wives, I am told, can be so vexatious. I remember poor Mrs. Rackshaw very vividly. Such a temper, my dear. But of course if he was successful it would be very nice for you, although bishops' wives have no title, nothing. Very unfair, I think — the Lord Bishop and plain Mrs. Not just.

"Authors, I am told, make a great deal of money, but I was wondering if dear Bryan had quite enough of just that sort of ability. It's very special, you know: no disgrace to be without it. Your dear father was always clever with his pen, and Heaven knows where he got it from, for I am a poor hand at writing anything, and your grandfather spelt badly to the end. Tuesday always with eu, you know, and all at sea with his eis and ies. But so kind and considerate, and the soul of honour. Yet Bryan must have some very interesting things to write about. Those flying-fish, for instance. They tell me at the library that books of travel are always in demand."

"I think it is very likely," said Alison, "that Mr. Oast will find a post for Bryan in his boat-building works."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Ingleside. "But a clean post, I hope. No black oil. A position of control. But he must be very careful not to let Mr. Oast influence him. Those dreadful Socialist notions. No property safe, you know. And the Crown too — so disloyal. I can't imagine what your dear father can see in that man. And I always dread that his Department will discover the friendship. But there, your dear father would always go his own way. Even when quite a child he refused to wear braces any longer and bought a belt with his own money. A little roll of shirt always showing. Well, well."

The next morning Mrs. Ingleside insisted on Bryan and Alison accompanying her into Brighton to choose a wedding present.

"Something that you both decide on," she said. "We must go to Brighton. Hove has excellent shops for all the necessaries of life; but for the luxuries, Brighton. I want to get you something you won't have to exchange. I know exactly what it is: a large silver teapot. Every young couple ought to have one and never part with it. Very solid, with your initials engraved on it in a nice intertwined monogram. I have quite made up my mind."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IN WHICH WE BECOME LISTENERS IN A NORFOLK RECTORY

BRYAN having left for his last voyage, Alison was naturally a little lonely, and she was therefore not sorry when Leslie asked her one evening if she thought Mr. Ingleside would let her off for a few days for his pageant.

"How exciting," she said, "but I don't think he would. Do you mean both of us?" she added.

"Of course," said Leslie.

"Ann's so busy," said Alison; "and I shouldn't care a bit for it without her."

"Well, we must see," said Leslie.

Ann was quite willing to go, but Mr. Ingleside demurred.

"What on earth do you want them for?" he asked. "The world's full of girls: why come here? Go to a house where there are several: I have only two."

"But I want them," said Leslie. "They're exactly the right type for my Tudor head-dresses. I design them as maids of honour to Queen Elizabeth."

"How do you get Queen Elizabeth into it? She was never at Bungay," Dr. Staminer interjected.

"Never at Bungay!" cried Leslie. "My dear sir,

your ignorance of history, especially of Bungay history, is abysmal. If you had been as busy in making pageants as I have, you would know that Queen Elizabeth was connected with all places. She had to be — we needed it! As a matter of fact, you are technically right in denying her any direct association with Bungay; but only technically. Her interest in the place was undoubted, since it is on record that she once remarked to an importunate or inconvenient companion, 'Oh, go to Bungay!'"

"But, my dear Leslie," said Dr. Staminer, "you don't mean seriously to tell me that on the strength of that exclamation you drag the queen into your spectacle!"

"Drag!" retorted Leslie. "What horrid language! Certainly," he continued. "It's historical, isn't it? Great Scott, sir! how do you think we can make decent pageants without a little help of that kind? All very well for Bath with its King Bladud and Beau Nash ready made, and running over with material; or Winchester with Alfred the Great; or Pevensey with William the Conqueror; or Colchester with Old King Cole; but Bungay had to get along with less assistance. However, the Bungay Pageant is going to be a great success, but we must have Ann and Alison. We'll have Ingleside too if he likes. King Stephen would suit him down to the ground. And you, sir, you'd make a first-rate Benedictine prior. There's room for all. There are costumes for hinds, carles, serfs, and Ramer, all going begging. All are welcome."

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, "I call it absurd,

coming all the way to London for your Norfolk tomfooleries. Are there no local maids of honour?"

Mr. Leslie explained that the local ladies were already alotted their rôles.

"One must import talent into a small town," he said.

"It's only a week," Alison remarked.

"Then you want to go?" her father asked.

"I think it would be fun," Alison admitted. "I've always heard that pageants are fun."

And it was therefore settled.

"But don't expect to find me here when you come back," Mr. Ingleside warned her. "Prodigal daughters can do it once too often."

They were invited to take any other potential maid of honour they could think of, and Ann at once wrote to Sybil Aylward and secured her. They were to stay, Leslie said, with some old friends of his at Wilmingham Rectory, a few miles out of Bungay. It was doubly convenient, for the rector's wife was Queen Elizabeth herself.

"Not that she is at all Elizabethan," said Leslie, "but we had to give her a good part, as she's rather influential and has guaranteed a large sum. I dare say she'll look all right in a red wig, but we're all sorry for the Earl of Essex. Her husband, the rector, is all for horses and dogs, but he's a trump, and you'll get through the week somehow. It's jolly good of you to go anyway."

As it happened, the girls got on famously with Mr. Catt-Wilkins, who kept the church (in Sybil's words) "so exquisitely in the background. How

different from father!" she added, "who loved revivalist services, but always came back so cross after them. He never seemed to care much for his family at any time, but the nearer he had been to heaven the more he disliked us. I suppose it's an awful shock after the excitement of feeling frightfully good and happy to return to the same old wife and the same old children and the same old cooking."

The Reverend Cyril Catt-Wilkins was a short and round man, clean-shaved and ruddy, who knew the Christian names of all his parishioners. To accompany him in his dogcart, as the girls did more than once, was to receive a liberal education in rural nomenclature.

"'Morning, Tom. How's the mare?"

"'Morning, Ben. We're ready for another of your cucumbers!"

"'Morning, Sam. Misses better, I hope."

"'Morning, Fred. Sorry to hear your voice has cracked."

As for his sermons, he had the good fortune to possess several MS. volumes of Sydney Smith's, which he had bought at Sotheby's years before, and these he turned and re-turned as usefully and thriftily as an old woman a good silk. He used to quote with much gusto the northern parson's post-burglary couplet —

"They came and prigged my silver, my linen and my store,
But they couldn't prig my sermons: they had all been prigged before."

He hadn't a spiritual thought in his head; but he would sit up all night to assist the lying-in of a spaniel. He practised few virtues of abstention; but his burial services were Shakespearean in their humanity. He was not clever; but he was clever enough to be suspicious of cleverness. He lived out of the world, but watched it and knew how it wagged.

Sybil's frankness gave him immense pleasure, and they had many a bout of discussion. Like so many modern clergymen, he allowed her extraordinary latitude in her references to his calling; but he retained her respect.

"Personally," he said one evening after she had been praising tolerance, "I'm getting rather bored by breadth of mind. Breadth of mind nowadays seems to mean nothing but looking for the humaner virtues among drunkards and atheists and ignoring them among parsons. It is time for some one to point out how much more difficult it is for a parson to be good than, for example, for a pugilist. A parson is always in the limelight: he has to wear a ridiculous collar that buttons at the back, which alone stamps him as pious; his clothes are black and forbiddingly cut — he has to go to Switzerland in August in order to wear anything comfortable; he is thrown continually among old and narrow-minded virgins whom he dare not offend since they possess the money which his church needs, and bit by bit, unless he is very careful or very careless, they sap away what his daily avocations have left of his mind. And so it comes to this, that when a parson is good,

it is nothing: that's what he's there for; but when a pugilist is good, you wipe your eyes. 'How beautiful! Such a sweet nature!' You ought logically to be just as much interested in a parson who had enough character to be wicked."

Sybil and the rector had also some passages over the vote, as indeed was inevitable.

"Well," he said, on the first evening, "I suppose all you young ladies are suffragettes."

"I am," said Sybil.

The rector laughed. "And you want to vote, do you?" he pursued, warming to the old fray.

"Of course I do, if anyone does," said Sybil. "I don't if no one does. Wouldn't you want a vote if you hadn't got one and all the women had?"

"I suppose I should," the rector admitted.

"Then why shouldn't we?"

"Well, you see," said the rector, "that's different. Legislature and politics and all that are a man's affair. They're natural to him. But it's not a woman's line of country at all."

"What is a woman's line of country?" Sybil asked.

"What is it?" the rector replied, "why, minding the house, of course, ordering a good dinner, cooking it, keeping the accounts, looking after the children."

"Yes," said Sybil, "but suppose there aren't any children? Suppose it's a single woman, with no one's home to mind and a living to get just like a man, isn't she to have any say in her country's affairs?"

"Well, perhaps she might," said the rector; "but not the others. I'd keep it strictly to those who understood what politics meant. There should be some kind of examination."

"But does every man that has the vote understand?" Sybil inquired sweetly.

The rector took refuge in facetiousness, the last infirmity of cowardly minds. "What I always say," he said, " is that I will believe in women's suffrage when all women wear the same-shaped hat."

"That's a comic-paper joke," said Sybil. "I consider you beaten."

"And these other ladies," said the rector, "I wonder what they think. You, Miss Ingleside?" he inquired, turning to Alison.

"I should like to have a home," said Alison.

The rector beamed approval.

"Or," she added, "to be of some value in other people's homes."

"Ah!" exclaimed the rector triumphantly.

"But please don't think that that makes me any more right than Sybil," said Alison. "It's only what my own wish is."

"It is the normal women," said the rector, "who carry on the business of life. The hand that rocks the cradle — ah! And you, Miss Ann?"

"I don't care a bit about politics," said Ann, "and I don't particularly about home. I like to be mixed up with the affairs of life: but not in the least bad-temperedly. I like men, and I like them to do the business part of the country; but I think it's very sporting of Sybil to want to do it too."

The rector laughed. "You're too modern for me," he said. "Come and see the puppies."

It was a sure road to a truce, for Sybil had a whirlwind way with puppies and kittens: she would hold them to her in a kind of ecstasy of companionship, as different from the sickly caresses of Miss Anstruther as anything could be. By a stroke of luck there were at Wilmingham Clumber puppies a month old, and it is really a wonder that Sybil ever arrived at the pageant at all with such precious armfuls to cherish at the Rectory.

"I wish you'd adopt me," she said one day to the rector. "Let me be your curate. Why shouldn't women be curates anyway? Curates have been called women too long."

"Not a bad idea!" said Mr. Catt-Wilkins. "A few curates like Miss Ingleside and you, and the men might be lured back to church again."

"Then we are united in our battle-cry," remarked Sybil. "'Curacies for women!'"

Mrs. Catt-Wilkins was very unlike her husband. He was an outdoor man and she an indoor woman, and neither would have chosen each other were they now, at their present ages, to meet for the first time. Their romance and their need for each other were alike over. Not that they pined or wasted away: the blessed gift of acquiescence, which the kind gods gave to man, saved them, as it saves millions. Mr. and Mrs. Catt-Wilkins moaned not at all, for he was far too busy in the countryside with his horses and dogs, neighbours and parishioners, while to her the uncongeniality of her husband was the cause of a

pleasant wistfulness which kept her far happier than any lover could have done. Wistfulness was indeed her staple food. She spent her whole life in a gentle envy, a whispered wish to be somewhere else in more delightful surroundings; but although she was rich and her husband would have set few or no obstacles in the way, she never went. Her meat and her poison were one.

Mrs. Catt-Wilkins was a great reader and in a small way a patron of letters.

"I suppose you know all the interesting people in London, Miss Ingleside," she said one morning, as she and Alison sat in her boudoir and watched the clouds gathering for the pageant. Alison and Mrs. Catt-Wilkins were much together, for Ann and Sybil went off with the rector; and though she would much rather have accompanied them, Alison did not like to leave her hostess alone.

"How I should love to live in London," said Mrs. Catt-Wilkins. "Bungay is so dull, so restricted. And then the parish! A parson's wife, you know!"

Alison murmured sympathetic agreement, although she had seen nothing of her hostess's parochial activities.

"Do tell me," the lady continued — "you who come right from the very centre — who know every one — what is Mr. Hichens like?"

"Mr. Hichens?"

"Yes, *The Garden of Allah*, you know. Ah!" Mrs. Catt-Wilkins rolled her eyes in rapture. "What a book! You've no idea what it must mean to a resident near Bungay, and a country clergyman's

wife to boot, when the hot breath of the desert rolls in like that."

Alison said that she had not read it.

"'To preside over a London salon,' was what I once wrote many years ago, in a confession album; and I still have the same wish. One alters so little *au fond*. Is it not so?"

Alison said it was.

"Madame Récamier!" exclaimed Mrs. Catt-Wilkins, throwing up her eyes. "It surprises me that the salon is extinct. And talk, I am told, is extinct too: real talk — to *causer*, you understand — is no more. Yet I believe," she continued, with a glance at herself in the mirror, "that by the right person it might be revivified and nourished back into prosperity. But of course the right person."

Alison was tired and took no hint.

"We have no genius at Bungay," said Mrs. Catt-Wilkins. "A literary society, called the Circle, meets in the winter, once a month; and Mr. Rider Haggard is quite near. But Mr. Rider Haggard never took me off my feet as Mr. Hichens does. I am a great reader. I don't know how I should endure but for books; and I am so peculiar, you know, I have so much imaginative sympathy, that when I am reading a book that is entirely congenial to me I feel I am actually in the room with the author: that we are together, conversing, exchanging ideas. My husband is very good, of course, but he no longer cares to exchange ideas. And as there is no one else here with whom any real intercourse is possible — he does not even keep a curate — I am driven back on

my books. The *Times* library is such a boon to us — it came as a positive godsend, for we have no children, you know, and now I have all the new books, which I aways wanted, and my husband has the *Times*, which he always wanted. I assure you I positively could not eat while that terrible struggle was going on, for fear of losing this great privilege. All this will show you, Miss Ingleside, what it must mean to me to have this pageant here and to meet so many new people. I love new people, and I see so few. I wish the pageant could be held annually. Do speak to Mr. Leslie, Miss Ingleside — use your great influence — to have it made an annual event. I am sure it might well be. There is a cattle-show here every year, you know."

CHAPTER XXXIX

IN WHICH MASQUERADERS PROVE THEMSELVES VERY HUMAN

THE pageant ground was a field just outside the town in which wooden stands had been built on one side of an arena. The green-room was a large tent, and here the ages mingled, monarchs and monks, earls and carles smoking cigarettes and making twentieth-century gossip. The Abbess of the old Benedictine nunnery and Queen Elizabeth discussed Mr. Bernard Shaw's last play, which had just reached Bungay in book form, and which the abbess on her last visit to London had seen and admired; King Stephen and Henry III were deep in an argument on the rival merits of Fielder and Mr. Brearley on a hard wicket. The total effect was one of chronology run mad.

Each maid of honour in Queen Elizabeth's suite had a gentleman companion with whom to make some show of animated conversation during the tableau. Alison was fortunate, for her ally was an amusing young artist who had recently married and whose wife was a leading figure in an earlier tableau. They had taken a house in Norfolk, he said, to be out of the way, among total strangers; but that was a state of things intolerable to the countryside, and

cards were falling upon them like autumn leaves. "The neighbourhood," he said, "might be robins, and ourselves the babes in the wood."

Alison said that she supposed it was always like that. "You needn't return the calls," she added.

"That's what I say," said the courtier, "but my wife won't have it. 'How can one behave like that!' she asks. Well, there's nothing much easier, to my mind, than not calling on people; but she says not. 'All very well for you in your studio to talk like that; but what kind of life is there for me if I don't know a soul and everyone thinks I'm stuck up, just because I'm not sociable?'"

Alison agreed that this was sound.

"So what do you think I'm going to do?" said the artist. "I'm going to put this advertisement in the *Morning Post:* —

"'Wanted by gentleman and lady who are settling in a new part of the country, and wish to be quiet and private, a presentable couple to occupy an adjacent cottage and personify them when the neighbourhood calls.'"

He was always entertaining, and Alison enjoyed her Tudor strolls with him as much as Sybil was bored by her partner. Mr. Monkswell, who made conversation with her, was a young Norfolk solicitor with a passion for the stage. He belonged to the Doom School of Drama, and liked to be harrowed and, as he said, "sent away thoughtful."

"A wonderful engine," he called the theatre. "Books are all very well in their way, of course," he said, "but you can lay them aside so easily.

Sermons make an appeal only when the preacher has magnetism: besides, the conditions are wrong. But the stage! Ah, there you have everything to compel attention. The eye and the ear are both engaged. The electricity of personality thrills you. There is no power like the power of the drama for good or ill. A wonderful engine — that is what I always call the stage."

"Do you go to the Gaiety?" Sybil asked sweetly.

Mr. Monkswell was surprised and pained. "I mean the serious stage," he said. "To my mind a play without a problem is merely an entertainment, a beguilement. And of such things I am in no need. I should not have taken any interest in the pageant had it not been for the wish, which I have always had, to see the Bungay people really thinking intelligently and even imaginatively of Bungay. We are taught so vividly through the eye. No one witnessing this kaleidoscope of the ages (so to speak) can ever think of Bungay again purely as a twentieth-century town."

"No," said Sybil, "and it will be some time before some of the inhabitants who are taking part in the pageant get back their twentieth-century character. Mr. Gloss, the butcher, for example—how funny to ask him for a mutton chop after seeing him capering as Sir Christopher Hatton!"

"But to return to the stage," said Mr. Monkswell. "Have you seen that amazing play at the Mausoleum — *Insanity?*"

"No," said Sybil. "I never go to such things."

"You should," said Mr. Monkswell. "Most in-

structive. As Aristotle says, the education of the senses by pity and fear. I'll tell you the plot."

"Please don't," said Sybil.

"The curtain rises," said Mr. Monkswell, "on an empty stage. I always think that's very dramatic. There's a kind of mystery, almost uncanniness, about an empty stage. It is a private asylum — most realistically reproduced: a masterpiece. After a minute or two a knock is heard on the door. There is naturally no one to open it, and so it opens itself, and in comes an old man with a long white beard. That is nothing, you say. No; but listen: he comes in on his hands and knees! Think of it. It's terrible. He crawls over to the hearthrug, where there is a plate of milk, and laps it up. He is mad. Don't you think that a remarkable start?"

"It's uncanny enough," said Sybil. "But I don't admit any particular need for me to see it."

"And then," Mr. Monkswell continued, "his young and beautiful wife comes in, and when she sees him she screams. You see, he has got away from his keepers. I need hardly say that his madness is very interesting: logical outcome of a morbidly neurotic temperament. In his youth he had sown not only wild oats but tares, you understand. 'The gods are just, you know, and of our pleasant vices ——' You remember the passage? He has a young wife, but I could hardly tell you the rest."

"Pray don't trouble," said Sybil. "All those plays are just alike."

"But the madman is wonderfully played," said Mr. Monkswell. "A most impressive performance."

"Anyone can play a madman," said Sybil. "It's the ordinary sane people that are so difficult."

And so it went on every afternoon.

To Ann fell a vigorous young barbarian.

"I shouldn't be in this rotten old pag.," he said, "if it weren't for my governor being King Stephen and guaranteeing it. I'm missing some jolly good cricket. It is the sort of thing a fellow ought to go to heaven for. It isn't as if these togs fitted, either. They're the tightest things I ever had on. Are yours tight?"

Ann said that she had been more comfortable.

"Comfortable! I should think so!" he replied. "It's all tommy rot to say that Raleigh laid down his coat in a puddle for Queen Elizabeth to walk on. He couldn't have done it: he couldn't have knelt, not in Tudor costume. I bet you if I were to kneel something would rip. It's all my sister's fault; she made the rotten things. I told her I should want a shoehorn to get into them; but she knew best, of course. Last night it took both the groom and the gardener to pull them off me, and to-day I had to be chalked before I could get them on."

The girls were very popular among the knights and serfs, kings and courtiers. Introductions go by the board at pageants: any costume may talk to any costume; although to belong to the same period of course confers an extra familiarity. A few of the more select ladies kept on their dignity even under these new and untoward conditions: indeed, they had to, for Bungay is not large enough to provide both pageant and spectators too without calling in

the assistance of trade. Hence a few *rencontres* such as no really nice people can desire, between vicarage and grocery, consulting room and dispensary, nonconformity and the Manor. But (like deck acquaintanceships) it was tacitly understood that no loss of principle was involved, that no advantage was to be taken of this condescension when the return was made to skirts, trousers, and the normal status; and therefore all went very amicably.

There were of course the little unavoidable difficulties, but they were as essential as the rain. Every pageant has both. Mr. Somers-Gage, for example, the local antiquary and poet, who wrote certain lyrics for Leslie's book, never got over the surgical operation which permanently removed four of his best efforts after the first performance. It is true that it was at the first performance that the critics were present: but none the less Mr. Somers-Gage was hurt, and more than hurt, surprised. It was not so much the elision of the verses that cut him, he explained to every one in turn in a querulous monotone: the pageant-master doubtless knew best; and no doubt the performance was too long; what troubled him so was the thought of the impaired idea that strangers now obtained of Bungay's place in history, since the very spirit of Bungay was conveyed in his lost lines. He also felt very deeply not only for the singers who had practised the songs so loyally, but also for poor Mrs. Anguish, who had set them to such charming music. Not that the air might not have been a little more bright and tuneful: for his part, it was a shade too melancholy; and yet it was

a good setting, and he regretted intensely that it should have had to go. No doubt, however, Chappell would take it up later, in a historical sequence, and possibly Miss Liza Lehmann — or Mr. Plunket Greene, for choice, since the subject was largely martial and needed a male voice — would sing it.

Mrs. Anguish, who took the part of Astræa (who, as every one knows, stands in metal in the market-place and was introduced into the pageant very happily as a kind of tutelary spirit), also had something to say on the matter; but her complaint was pitched in a key of perfect resignation, as of one who had long since given up hope of ever getting any kind of justice in this world. For Mrs. Anguish, it seems, had all her life been the victim of musicians' jealousies, and nothing but their machinations and the refusal of London to believe that any good thing could come from a Bungay composer had prevented the performance not only of her Saxon opera entitled *Olla and Podrida* at Covent Garden, but at the Queen's Hall her tone poem on the subject of the transmigration of souls.

All three girls heard the story of Mrs. Anguish's life in precisely similar words, which they were able afterwards to compare and verify, a task of infinitely greater entertainment than the narrative itself.

CHAPTER XL

IN WHICH AID IS FORTHCOMING FOR A HOUSE LACKING A MOTTO

"MARLTYE GRANGE is finished now," said Leslie one evening. "It wants only one thing — a motto. I'm sure the millionnaire would like a motto."

"In Latin?" Dr. Staminer asked.

"Oh no, I don't think so," said Leslie. "That would be affectation. English. The question is, shall it be original or an old one?

"If I were a poet, I have been thinking, I would try to write mottoes for houses; for it's a kind of verse that enforces brevity and conciseness, and it enforces also a sort of optimism, or, at any rate, kindliness; for who would inscribe over his doorway a churlish or hopeless couplet? One may be only too conscious of disillusion and the necessary end of all things, and yet be no Timon. But there's no particular need to compose a motto, because I've a book here which contains dozens of them. It is called *The House, the Garden, and the Steeple.* I wish it had been belfry because that's so much prettier a word, but no matter. Let me read you some. I like this, but it might not suit the millionnaire —

'If this house be fine or not,
That was ne'er my serious thought;
But it will have gained its ends
Shall I fill it full of friends.'

American millionnaires don't seem to have so many friends as all that."

"Besides," said Richard Oast, "it's not true. He wanted it to be fine. It *was* his serious thought."

"As serious," said Dr. Staminer, "as a thought can be when it is backed up by no personal interest — nothing but cheques."

"This, then," said Leslie —

"'Stranger, should this catch your eye,
Do a favor passing by:
Bless this house e'er you be gone,
And it shall bless you passing on.'"

"Not bad," said Mr. Ingleside. "In fact, good."

"Some are a little too self-conscious," said Leslie, "and some a little superior. The householder — the castellan — creeps in to insist too much on ownership, and sometimes there is a hint of command too, as in this —

'If a welcome thou wouldst win,
Wipe your feet and then come in.'

That is meant to be kind, but it is not impulsively warm enough quite to effect its purpose, for one might very easily pause outside and wonder if the risks of offending such a carefully clean host were worth taking. A prettier sentiment would be this (my own) —

To all a welcome I extend:
A friend, though muddy, 's still a friend.

Or this —

With dirty boots or clean, come in;
Your bottle's waiting in the binn."

"That sentiment," said Dr. Staminer, "was excellently put in the Methodist hymn which so took Lamb's fancy —

'Come needy, come guilty, come loathesome and bare;
You can't come too filthy — come just as you are.'

The home there is the heavenly home, of course; but the sentiment would suit a Tudor grange none the less."

Leslie continued his reading. "This is prettily put," he said —

"'We should a guest love, while he loves to stay,
But when he likes not, give him loving way.'

And this too —

'Thro' this wide opening gate
None come too early, none return too late.'

But that surely is a sentiment which would come more fittingly from a grateful rhyming guest than a host, in whose mouth it has just a hint of complacency. It's the sort of thing for a visitors' book. And that reminds me there is no visitors' book at Marltye. I must order one, to be bound in vellum, I think, with illegible lettering. He'll like that."

"What about the motto of the Abbey of Thelème?" Dr. Staminer asked.

"Well, here it is," said Leslie, "on the next page—

'In this my house I live att ease,
And here I doe whate'er I please.'

But did he, I wonder, that old builder? Did he do what he pleased?"

"Probably not," said Mr. Ingleside. "It is not timber, brick, or stone (as Cowper would say) that grants such liberties."

"Another old builder," Leslie continued, "writes—

'Wouldst thou put happiness to proof,
Then always live 'neath thine own roof.'

But that, if genuinely obeyed, would strike the death-blow to hospitality, because no one could ever visit at all. There you have, I should imagine, a genuinely ancient couplet; but in the following I detect a modern note —

'Give this house, oh traveller, pray,
A blessing as you pass this way.
And if you've time, I beg your pardon,
While you're at it bless this garden.'"

"I don't care for that at all," said Dr. Staminer. "Too colloquial and jaunty."

"I've been composing one or two," said Christie, "while you've been reading. "How do you like this? —

This edifice of wood and stone,
Since mine the cost, is called my own;
But you who shelter here, no less
My house and all it holds possess."

"Good," said Dr. Staminer, "I like that."

"I like it too," said Mr. Ingleside, "but I don't think you had better have it cut in stone, Leslie."

"Why not?"

"Because America is simply alive with poets," said Mr. Ingleside, "and if an original motto is to be used, Mr. Thayer will want to give the job to a compatriot. My American friend Mr. Waler knows personally three hundred and sixty-five poets, one for every day in the year; and these little four-lined things are just shucks to them; they write them all the time. So you had better either stick to Latin or something very well known, or wait for the arrival of the owner."

"Never mind, Christie, give us some more," said Leslie.

"I've only done one other," said Christie, "yet —

> The fire's alight; at eight we dine:
> Come in, good friend, and choose your wine.

I wrote that as a counterblast to the lady who was so keen about us wiping our boots."

"I tried too," said Dr. Staminer. "I wrote this —

> Madam, this trifling mud forget;
> But — have you warmed the claret yet?"

"That goes home," said Mr. Ingleside. "A rebuke in the right spirit."

"I'm glad I bought this book," said Leslie, "since it makes you all so clever. Now for the garden mottoes. They belong to sundials, of course, and

they are nearly always sad. Now and then, however, a note of hope breaks in. Here is one —

'"Tis always morning somewhere in the world.'

That is gayer, but on one side of it is this —

'Time wastes our bodies and our wits,
But we waste time, and so we're quits,'

and on the other this, which epitomizes all sundial lore —

'When comes the sun the vanish'd shade appears,
But ne'er to us return our vanish'd years.'

Too true. So true that it is hardly worth repeating. I prefer —

'"Tis always morning somewhere in the world.'"

"Or," said Dr. Staminer, "Sancho Panza's mellow encouragement —

'There is still sun on the wall.'"

"Here's another gloomy one," said Leslie. "Too dreary for me —

'We are travelling each towards the sunset.'

Why should it be the sundial's special mission to give pain? But that's nothing compared with this sentence of six words which positively makes one creep —

'It is later than you think.'

Genial devil to put that in the middle of a nice garden so that you might come on it suddenly on a summer's day!

'It is later than you think.'

Christie, can't you give us an antidote?"

"How do you like this?" Christie asked —

"I'm useful only in the sun:
A cloud, and all my work is done.

Or —

I chatter only in the light.
You've more philosophy at night.

Those seem to me, by delimiting its powers, to depreciate it as a monitor."

"I have done one too," said Mr. Ingleside —

"Thou com'st to me to learn the hours?
Ah, foolish one,
Leave time alone,
And happy be among the flowers."

"I like that," said Leslie. "I shall adopt that for the sundial, whatever happens."

"And the belfry?" asked Dr. Staminer.

"The belfry section is dull," said Leslie; "but here is a pleasant couplet for Alison's wedding. 'When' — these words are engraved on the bells, you know —

'When female virtue weds with manly worth,
We catch the rapture and we spread it forth.'

Pope, I think."

"More like Crabbe," said Mr. Ingleside. "I seem to detect worsted stockings in it."

CHAPTER XLI

IN WHICH A LOST VOICE IS HEARD, AND WE MEET WITH MR. AND THE MISSES THAMES

IT was only a month or so before Alison's wedding, and her father was beginning to see the day ahead of him like a menace, and was correspondingly depressed. And then one morning the postman brought a letter from Askill — that rarest of events — which seemed in no way to lighten his gloom.

"A sprained ankle," it began, "gives me a chance to write: but don't expect much.

"The postmark will give me away; but it is likely that you have already heard of my present abode. There are no secrets on a planet only 25,000 miles in circumference.

"Let me say at once that Oregon is as wonderful a country as I always dreamed it. Almost. Of course nothing quite comes up to our hopes, just as nothing quite fulfils our fears; but Oregon is all right. The word had a fascination for me even when quite a child — I must have told you — and I never shook it off. Oregon: don't you feel it? You can breathe here.

"You will be amused to hear that I built my hut myself. With these hands I cut down the trees and trimmed them. Not bad for one who might, if he had stuck to it, be now a K.C. — that is, if you still have a king in need of counsel.

"I get very little news, and when I hear it I find I did not want it. But I should like to see you again.

"How different we can be, we rats in the rat-trap! A man was here a few months back with a bundle of old papers.

He read and re-read them day and night. In the midst of this country and this air he read and re-read old papers. Weekly things for the most part, but a few dailies too. He said they made him feel like a citizen again, reminded him of home. Advertisements for servants — he read them too. The very words 'housemaid,' 'parlour maid,' 'butler,' gave him a thrill. They recalled ham and eggs, and hot water for shaving, and old brandy, and everything he has not had for years and apparently wants. And all the while the snow was on the mountain-tops and the air had pines in it, and while he was reading aloud a paragraph — I couldn't stop him, hadn't the heart to — about the Bishop of London's success at golf somewhere, an eagle was hovering overhead. He never saw it.

"The fellow had his uses, though, in spite of his eternal chatter about the living tomb he called home. In one of his papers I caught sight of the announcement of the completion of your Horace. If that means that you are done with obligations for awhile, take a long holiday and come over here. It is rough, but you shall not suffer. Things can be arranged for a London gentleman even in a log hut 3000 feet above the sea-level. You will lose your Thames, but the sound of a rushing torrent shall never be absent. You will lose your towns and chimneys, but we have a range of snow mountains. You will lose your books, but your eyes shall not go idle and your grey matter will gain. Also you will meet a philosopher at once nearer the good earth and nearer the stars than your cautious and calculating (though long-lived) Q. H. F. ever was: four-footed (of course) and grizzly-haired — by name, Sage; by genus, dog. Also you shall breathe, which no Londoner ever did yet. And most of all, you shall — almost — forget the rat-trap."

So Askill wrote, from his eyrie, and Mr. Ingleside was conscious of a touch of nostalgia for this distant recluse and his fastidious aloofness. Coming as it did upon the imminent loss of his latest friend — the closest since Askill went away — the letter depressed

him visibly, and Alison was in her turn depressed too. Indeed, she had thought not a little lately of the selfishness — inevitable, of course, and natural (like all selfishness), but selfishness none the less — of this marriage of hers, taking her, as it was, at so early an age, right away from her father; and just, too, when he was, as she could plainly see, beginning to appreciate her presence. The portion of beer and skittles that is set aside for the self-conscious in this life is by no means Benjaminic.

"Do let's have a little excursion all our own," she said, crossing to Mr. Ingleside and taking his arm. "Not even Henry Thrace. Just you and Ann and I."

"The last we shall ever have," said Mr. Ingleside, who never funked the truth: in fact, rather liked it in its grimmer aspect.

"I don't see why not," said Alison. "You talk as if marriage were death."

"No," he said, "not death; but nothing is ever the same again. You will come and see me, and I perhaps shall go and see you, but it won't be you — it won't be my Alison, but Bryan's — and it won't be me, it will be Bryan's father-in-law. These are iron facts: nothing can alter them."

"Oh, I dare say," said Alison. "But there are plenty of iron facts that, even if they cannot be altered, can be ignored, at any rate until the time is ripe. Don't anticipate them. Let's be a little happy again and forget that I am going to ruin everything. Let's go and discover some really nice old town, where we are perfect strangers, and not say

a word about our real life at all. We'll be brother and sisters if you like."

"What a joke!" said Ann.

"All right," said Mr. Ingleside, "and we'll change our name to make it more real. We'll go as Mr. and the Misses"—he looked out of the window—"Mr. and the Misses Thames."

"But where shall we go?" Ann asked.

"Why not try that place that Ramer is always raving about?" said Mr. Ingleside. "Alfriston. Somewhere in Sussex, between Eastbourne and Lewes. Go round, Tansy, and ask him all about it, but don't say why, or he'll come too."

And it was Alfriston to which the Thames family made their way; changing at Berwick, on the following Saturday afternoon, into a decrepit vehicle known as a fly, and moving with every shuffle of the old brown horse nearer and nearer to the green hills of Sussex and the ancient Star Inn which was to be their home; and every moment their spirits rose, as the air of the river valley became sweeter and fresher, and the soft contours of the Downs soothed and the great height of the Downs excited.

There is only one Alfriston, and not unwisely is it called the Darling of the Downs, which surround and cherish it: a small village with one beautiful ancient street, and a ruined market cross at the end of it under a chestnut tree, and all the old tumbled façades covered with a yellow wash which takes the light of morning and takes the light of noon and takes the light of evening with equal serenity and charm. In this street is the Star, one of the oldest inns in

England. The church — the Cathedral of the Downs, it has been called — is below, nearer the river, massed up on a mound, with a venerable clergy house of the middle ages close by it, and then nothing but the river and the valley and the hills.

Alfriston's industry is training, and in its bars hung with coloured prints of famous winners little men with bowed legs discuss the chances of two-year-olds, and strings of beautiful creatures with skins that daunt the sun climb the hills from the stable by the green.

Such is Alfriston, and though on fine Saturdays and Sundays in the summer it has to pay the penalty of being so venerable and so lovely, it recovers its tranquillity and fastidious privacy immediately the last brake and motor-car have gone.

Here they stayed for six days, and were really happy in exploring the neighbourhood — one day walking to Polegate, by way of Lullington's toy church and the Long Man of Wilmington; one day climbing to Eastbourne over Beachy Head; one day over the beautiful turf to Southease Halt, and there taking train for Lewes, that wind-swept city of the hills, with perpendicular Georgian streets, and a grey castle over all, and sentry windmills on guard, and sheep surrounding it like a peaceful army.

It was a point of honour with them not to talk about Alison's marriage; and in order to keep the conversation from too personal topics, Mr. Thames invented a number of rivalries and sweepstakes which lent a new interest to their walks — although little enough in that strange and fascinating country was

needed. Thus, they competed as to which could find the greatest number of flowers in an hour; they guessed how long it would take (distances are very deceptive in those hills) to reach a given summit; and so forth.

Those were the long excursions. Shorter ones took them to the neighbouring villages — little more than straw yards and churches: Aliciston, with its ancient dovecot for a thousand birds and its venerable barn — surely the greatest barn in England — all a wonder of beams and pillars within, and all a wonder of warm, weather-beaten and moss-covered tiles without: within as beautiful and sombre as a cathedral, without as comforting as a hill; Berwick, islanded on its mound; Firle, in the shadow of its precipitous Beacon and nobility; and down the valley to the sea, where the Cuckmere joins the channel, and where a hundred years ago, when life was worth living, the smugglers used to land their kegs on dark nights. But they liked the hills the best, for their turf and their thyme and their purple scabious and their exhilaration; and also for the conversations which they offered with friendly shepherds and friendlier dogs — old wind-worn, shrewd men who had never been to London, and possibly could not read, but knew all that was needful.

Ramer was naturally not a little hurt when he heard where they had been, and he had his revenge in depreciating all the beauties of which they told him, and emphasizing the places they had omitted to see. "To think," he said, "that you never went to

Ripe! Do you know that Ripe has four Tudor houses in perfect condition? Do you know that you could have bought your lunch at a grocer's shop where Queen Elizabeth might have stayed!"

"I wish I'd known where you were going," said Dr. Staminer. "I have a friend in Lewes who collects incunabula. He has the finest example of the *Hypnerotomachia* in existence. He would have been glad to welcome any friend of mine."

"Did you ever hear of a Mr. Thames there?" Mr. Ingleside asked.

"No," said Dr. Staminer. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing," said Mr. Ingleside.

CHAPTER XLII

IN WHICH TWO YOUNG PEOPLE PREPARE TO BE VERY HAPPY—AND WHAT ELSE MATTERS?

ALISON and Bryan did not care to go abroad for their honeymoon. The routine horrified them: the Royal Warden, the long journey, the waiters, the other honeymooners, and all the rest of it. Instead they took rooms in a cottage in a little South Coast river harbour, and Mr. Ingleside lent them the *Caprice*, although Bryan very properly arranged for a sailing boat too.

Bryan had been brought up near a small harbour, and now that he was to be happy and idle, he had found himself longing to renew those early impressions and share them with Alison. He had hired the sailing boat not merely to sail in, but to be in: they would spend their days in her, whether out at sea or on her sheltered moorings: at ease on her deck they would command the harbour both with eye and ear. Bryan had an instinct, had he not? There is no holiday like that! How often on the weary night watches on his great liner had he longed for the time when he could enjoy such repose as this — still within call of his chosen element. He would momentarily shut his eyes and hear again the harbour sounds and see the harbour sights and feel the har-

bour movements — those dreamy, hypnotic movements. Most of all would he feel the harbour sun and acquire the harbour friendliness.

The harbour friendliness! The open, level gaze of men in boats — not gentry in boats, but boatmen: eyes that have gazed at the horizon so long that they look straight ahead by nature! The helpfulness of the men in boats; their gentleness; the clean grubbiness of them (for there is no dirt, there are only smears of tar, and patches); their interest (seeing everything, even with the backs of their heads); their abysmal deliberateness! He smiled as he thought of his little harbour's deliberateness: the men at work, without hurry, without knowledge of time, only of tide. He saw this one painting a hull; that one scraping a mast; another mending a net; another polishing brass; another — his head alone visible — shaving; another ferrying a passenger across; and others hammering in the shipbuilder's yard. But all alike deliberate, all part of Nature, and most whistling. He saw the boats coming in and going out; he heard sails going up and coming down; he saw mud-flats being covered with the beautiful water; the departure of the beautiful water and the exposure of the mud-flats; he heard the cries and wails of the sea-birds. No wonder, then, that when the time came to choose a place in which to spend the honeymoon he suggested this little harbour.

The wedding was to be a very quiet one; but on the evening before it Mr. Ingleside entertained a number of friends. Old Mrs. Ingleside and Miss

Airey were there: nice rooms had been found for them at the Grand Hotel, close by.

"It's a long time," said the old lady, "since I was at a wedding. Not since poor Clara Elphick's. She was married in May, I remember, and on the 13th, too, and every one was saying how unlucky it was. Unlucky indeed, for I saw in the paper that her eldest son lost his father-in-law only last week. But I'm sorry there are no bride's-maids, my dear. I like to see the bride's-maids, pretty things, and wonder which of them will go next. Nor pages. Not that I care very much for pages, although they're so fashionable. And no cake either, and no rice, I'm told. Well, well, times change; but I shouldn't have thought myself properly married if there hadn't been rice and old shoes. Such a number of old shoes, my dear. Your grandfather had so many young friends, you know, all full of fun.

"But that's all changed now, it seems, and every one has become thoughtful and anxious on wedding days. I suppose it's the fault of that foreigner who wrote the dismal plays: I forget his name — oh yes, Ibsen, wasn't it? A Dane, I think: the same country as our dear queen. Wonderful how Denmark crops up nowadays. They tell me at the grocer's that Danish bacon and eggs are better than the best English. Still, I consider his plays did a lot of harm. So gloomy. But then I suppose the Danes are a gloomy race: Hamlet was a Dane, you know, my dear. I never knew one personally, but a very interesting foreigner used to come to our house when we

were in Portland Place. A Signor Cosavella, but I think he was Italian.

"Well, well, my dear, we must be getting back to the hotel now. I shan't have a chance to speak to you again until you're Mrs. Hearne. I hope you'll be very happy, my dear, and live to use the teapot for many years. China tea, they tell me, is all the fashion now; but I still like the Ceylon the best. But you must please yourselves; don't let me influence you. Good-night, my sweet, good-night."

It was not until Mrs. Ingleside and Miss Airey had gone that Miss Larpent arrived — at once taking her place, as she did wherever she went, as the guest of honour. She established a court in Mr. Ingleside's study, and during the evening sent for the young couple to receive her final blessing.

"And so you are to be married to-morrow," she said, as they stood before her. "Well, I hope you will be very happy, and you will if you take my advice. A considerable experience of other people's married life and some gift of observation have qualified me to scatter good counsel.

"To you, Alison, I would say: Never have a headache on the same day as your husband, or, if you must, be sure to have it, or rather to mention it, first. Husbands and wives must never be seedy together.

"To you, Bryan, I would say: When Alison says to you, as she will, that she has a dreadful headache, be very careful, however you may feel, to affect to be perfectly well and anxious to look after her.

"To both of you I would say: Be very chary of

using the word 'always' when you are criticizing each other, as you sometimes must.

"To you, Alison, my dear, I would say: Never in the middle of one of Bryan's dinner-table stories give an order to a servant; and if he begins by saying that you went to the theatre on Friday, never remind him that it was really Thursday."

"But, dear Miss Larpent," said Alison, "you don't really mean that little things like that could make us seriously fall out?"

"My dear Alison," said the old lady, "I mean it absolutely. The cockle-shell of marriage is the least seaworthy of all the vessels on the ocean of life. A breath will capsize it.

"And you, Bryan, remember this: don't be sarcastic. Sarcasm in marriage is the thin end of the alienation wedge. If, however, you must be sarcastic — and you probably will, for it is the modern English husband's method of beating his wife — you, Alison, must be extremely careful not to be sarcastic too. A household can just stand one sarcastic inmate: two, and it must fall. No rightly constituted sarcastic husband could possibly stand sarcasm from his wife.

"To you, Bryan, I would say: Remember the chocolate shops; engrave Alison's size in gloves on your heart; arrange your walk home so that it includes a florist's.

"To you, Alison, I would say: Try to get a housemaid who can also cook; it means so much in emergencies.

"Finally" — and here the old lady became more

serious and indeed a little tender — "finally, remember this, that if you guard the pence of love, the pounds will take care of themselves. Don't be careless of the pence of love: keep up the little courtesies and thoughtfulnesses; keep up, as long as you possibly can, even the little vocabulary — for I will wager you have one. The pounds of love will take care of themselves if you watch these trifling pence."

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Ingleside, as Alison and he paced up and down on the Embankment after all the guests had gone. "Be as happy as you can, and ask me to come and see you only when Bryan is away. He will have to be away sometimes; and if he hasn't, send him away. The more a husband goes away from his home and his wife, in reason, the more he will think of them. The happiest husbands are commercial travellers, who go through life spending delightful week-ends with their wives. In any reincarnation on this globe that may be vouchsafed to me I hope to be a commercial traveller — principally for that reason.

"Good-bye, my dear child. I have seen very little of you, and now I am going to see less; but I love you very much, and I want you to be happy. I have arranged with my bankers to pay you a hundred and four pounds a year, on the understanding that not a penny of it is spent on household expenses."

It was a night of stars, and very still, and the river was silent, without a ripple. Alison said nothing; but she had her thoughts. She and her father were

more alike than other people or even he supposed, and there were hidden resemblances to him within her that probably would not come to the surface until she was much older. She felt for him now, for she saw with a flash of insight, possibly not to be recaptured for years, how lonely he was, and how little she really wanted to leave him, and how much more interesting he was, with all his detachments, than her nice but limited sailor. And then fortunately the veil dropped again, and she was again a simple girl, happy that to-morrow — or rather to-day, for it was very late — she was to be married to her lover and to have a home of her own. "Dear," she said, and kissed her father in a new way; and then he took her to the door and left her.

It was long before he entered the house himself. He resumed his walk by the inscrutable tide and thought with renewed longing of Askill.

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